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RELIGIOUS DOUBT

Skepticism

RELIGIOUS DOUBT

ITS NATURE, TREATMENT, CAUSES DIFFICULTIES, CONSEQUENCES AND DISSOLUTION

BY THE REV.

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TO MY BROTHER

JOSEPH R. DIGGLE

AND HIS WIFE

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

PREFACE

THE purpose which in this book, written from my own experiences of Religious Doubt, I have humbly endeavoured to fulfil is twofold. On the one hand I have sought to persuade believers to treat Religious Doubt with large-mindedness and in a Christian temper; and on the other hand, to persuade doubters not to be content with doubting, but to examine rigorously into the causes of their doubts, to confront steadily the great difficulties besetting doubt—difficulties often greater than those of belief—and to consider fairly the methods suggested for dissolving their doubts, and for attaining that degree of spiritual health and strength which is essential to clear and constant faith. I have to thank my friend, the Rev. Canon Lumby, D.D., Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, for his

kindness in correcting the proofs; though in so doing I desire to add that he should not be held to agree with every opinion I have ventured to express.

J. W. D.

The Vicarage, Mossley Hill, Liverpool,
Easter, 1895.

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CHAPTER I.

OF THE NATURE AND TREATMENT OF RELIGIOUS DOUBT.

"Man's word (which God hath not revealed to be His) a man may doubt without distrust in God."—BISHOP RIDLEY'S *Brief Declaration of the Lord's Supper, ad init.*

"What is wanted is a deeply religious liberal party. The great evil is that the Liberals are deficient in religion, and the Religious are deficient in liberality. Let us pray for an outpouring of the Very Spirit of Truth."—*Archbishop Tait's Life*, vol. i. p. 305.

THE subject of Religious Doubt is a difficult and delicate subject: its right treatment, therefore, requires both patient thought and kindly considerateness. If it be generally true of all human judgments that, unless they are generous, they are unjust: it is peculiarly true of judgments concerning Religious Doubt, because of the special intricacy and the personal feeling so frequently distinctive of debated religious questions. Thus great kindliness is essential both to the right understanding, and the right treatment, of Religious Doubt.

Even the nature of Religious Doubt is exceedingly difficult to describe with exactitude, or bring within the borders of clear definition: while differences of degree in doubt are simply immense, ranging from the verge of absolute denial to the verge of absolute belief. Of course, "doubting Christianity to the extent of neglecting both seriously to enquire into

its evidence and practically ignoring its precepts, is much the same thing as being certain against it."[1] But between this assumed certainty against Christianity and the full assurance of its truth, there are countless differences of belief and degrees of doubt. Indeed very few persons either indiscriminately receive, or indiscriminately reject each, and every, dogmatic assertion put forth in the name of the Christian Religion. Even among acknowledged believers, there are doctrines—such, *e.g.*, as the doctrines of Baptismal Regeneration, Indefectible Grace, Verbal Inspiration, Final Perseverance—which are surely believed by some, and severely questioned, by others. And among doubters, all do not doubt either the same doctrines, or the same doctrines in the same degree. The borderland between faith and doubt is thus altogether vague, irregular, and undefined. No one, therefore, who claims to be a believer should be condemned as a doubter. In all judgments concerning religious doubt, the way of charity, and the way of charity alone, is the way of justice and the way of truth.

Moreover the lack of unanimity in belief which is so conspicuous among individual Christians is equally conspicuous in collective Christian Communities. The Christian Churches are by no means of one mind in regard to Christian doctrine. The gulf between an orthodox Christian and a spiritually minded doubter is often less deep and fixed, than the gulf between two Christian Churches, both alike claiming to be orthodox. For the differences which divide the Churches styling themselves orthodox, are by no means, or generally, mere differences of detail

[1] Butler's "Analogy," p. 293.

either in doctrine or discipline. They are often differences lying at the very foundations of faith. The Greek Church is not divided from the Latin Church merely by such questions as the marriage of the priesthood, and the worship of images, and the form of the tonsure, and the leavening of Sacramental Bread, and the time of keeping Easter: their differences reach down to the very nature of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the Procession of the Holy Ghost. The questions on which the Reformed branches of the Latin Church are in conflict with the Papacy, are not questions of words but of fundamental principles: such as the Canon of Scripture and its Authority in relation to tradition: the powers of the priesthood and the operation of a Sacrament: the manner and condition of the forgiveness of sins, and the like. Nor even among the Reformed Churches can there be found anything like unanimity of religious opinion. The very conception of the Christian Church among Episcopalians is fundamentally different from that of Congregationalists: while the difference dividing Calvinistic Christians from Arminians is a difference reaching down to the roots of the religious responsibilities of men, and up to the summit of the predestinating sovereignty of the Eternal God.

Compared with these fundamental differences dividing Christian Communities from each other: such differences as divide many orthodox Christians from many spiritually minded doubters seem almost as nothing. For surely no one will contend that such questions as whether the Days of Creation were days of twenty-four hours or days of indeterminate

duration: whether the Narrative of the Fall is a history or an allegory: whether the Deluge was universal or partial: whether the statement that the "sun stood still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon,"[1] is to be regarded as a figure of speech or an astronomical fact: whether the authorship of various books of the Old Testament is simple or composite, and whether their dates have in all cases been rightly computed or not:—surely, I say, no one will contend that such questions as these, concerning which many spiritually minded men are in doubt, are as important or as fundamental as the questions upon which professedly orthodox Christians are in dispute: questions such as those already enumerated concerning the sovereignty of God, the free will of man, the nature of the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Procession of the Third Person, the Canon and Authority of Holy Scripture, the operation of a Sacrament, the manner and condition of the forgiveness of sins, and the like.

If, then, persons can disagree concerning capital and fundamental articles of faith such as these, and yet be accounted believers; does it not seem both illogical and uncharitable to condemn, as doubters, persons who find physiological difficulties in ascribing speech to a serpent, and geological difficulties in maintaining the universality of the flood, and moral difficulties in the narrative of the miracle associated with the swine at Gadara? And if the differences of faith among believers are thus often greater, and more real, than the differences dividing what is called faith from what is called doubt: should orthodox

[1] Josh. x. 12, 13.

Christians not extend to earnest doubters at least the same charity of judgment, and the same hope of salvation, which they extend to each other?

There is, moreover, a further reason for looking on religious doubt in a kindly temper and with generous eyes. It is of the very essence of religious doubt to germinate and grow, not in the large open fields of general human existence, but in the most secret and most inaccessible places of the *individual* human heart. As faith, in its very nature, is personal: so doubt is personal likewise. Opinions and arguments persuading and contributing to faith may be general in their character, and universal in their application: but faith itself is invariably personal and singular.

Nay, more! If for the moment we leave out of sight the purely spiritual essence of faith, and regard it only in its quality of an intellectual conviction (a conviction, however, somewhat in excess of perfect proof), yet, even in this aspect, faith can never be entirely dissociated from the individual character of each personal intellect. For the demonstrations which are satisfactory to individual believers are not of the same nature as the demonstrations necessary to satisfy the universal human intellect. There is a vast and essential difference between the demonstration, *e.g.*, of a proposition in Euclid; and the demonstration of any single article whatever of the Christian Creed. When a proposition of Euclid has been demonstrated and understood, the demonstration *compels* universal acceptance. No room is left for doubt. There is no opening for divergent schools, or contending denominations, in matters of Euclid. The demonstrations appeal, with compulsory force,

to the universal mind of man. The nature of the mathematical proof and the nature of the human mind are such respectively; that when the proof is presented to the mind, the mind has no option, no choice, in accepting it. Personal character, ethical considerations, the history of the individual life, have no bearing or influence whatsoever on a man's acceptance of a proposition of Euclid. The proposition is a question of pure intellect alone. Every condition of the problem is both knowable and set forth. And if a man is capable of understanding the conditions; he is, at the same time, also incapable of rejecting the solution. When he has grasped the nature of the proposition he is compelled irresistibly, and without the possibility of demur, to accept the demonstration. The nature of the human mind, and the nature of the mathematical proof, so powerfully and so universally combine together; that, in accepting the proof, the individual mind seems to be acting less by its own individuality, than as part of the universal human mind. There is no room for the divergent play of the personal intellect in the demonstration of propositions of Euclid. Every man demonstrates these propositions in much the same way; appeals to the same general principles; and is convinced by the same universally irresistible arguments.

It is altogether otherwise with religious doctrines and propositions of faith. It is utterly impossible to prove any of these doctrines, or to demonstrate any of these propositions, in such a manner as to compel universal assent and leave no room for the suggestions of doubt. The arguments which are

sufficient to establish a religious doctrine to one mind are not sufficient to establish it to the mind of another. The course of theological reasoning which to one man seems entirely adequate and conclusive; seems to another man, equally honest and perceptive, neither conclusive nor adequate. In the demonstrations of Euclid there is no possibility of doubt: concerning the articles of the faith, doubt is both common and abundant.

The causes of this great and essential difference between mathematical conviction and the convictions of faith are chiefly two.

(1) First, in a mathematical problem we know, fully and entirely, all its terms and conditions. Nothing is uncertain; and everything lies both within the range of our knowledge and the scope of our understanding. There is nothing indeterminate or transcendent in a proposition of Euclid. We are not left to draw inferences from the balance of probabilities. *There are no arguments on the other side.* The whole question spreads itself completely before our understanding, and is limited to the bounds of our apprehension. The demonstration also is clear, conclusive, certain. Hence the full positiveness of conviction and the entire absence of doubt.

How utterly and absolutely different is the state of things in reference to articles of faith and propositions of religion! Here the subjects are infinite, indeterminable, "from everlasting to everlasting." Instead of lying wholly within the sphere of our understanding and knowledge: it is of their very essence to extend beyond that sphere. It is, *e.g.*, of the very essence of the Eternal to transcend the

mortal; and of the finite to be exceeded by the Infinite. GOD, Who is Himself the primal object of religious faith, is incomprehensible and unfathomable by the capacities of man. "He is a God Who hideth Himself."[1] "His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts."[2] By no length or depth of searching can mortal man find out, to completeness and perfection, the purposes and attributes of the Eternal God.[3]

And if God, the primal object of all religion, lies so largely beyond the bounds of our understanding and knowledge: so also, though in more limited degree, are the other concerns of our religion partially incomprehensible and beyond our ken. Who, *e.g.*, can explain exactly, and without peril of mistake, the full nature of man's redemption through Christ, or the precise manner and conditions of the inworkings of the Holy Ghost? Yea, even of man himself: who can demonstrate with certainty the nature of his origin, the course of his descent, the amount of his individual responsibilities in relation to his hereditary tendencies and his sphere of opportunities? Who can delineate with precision the proof, and the character, of man's deathless life after death? Who can tell us the origin of evil; and why evil has been permitted to work such havoc on the earth? Or, if Christianity is essential to the salvation of man, who shall even hazard a guess why the Providence of God has never yet caused Christianity to be made known to more than a third of mankind?

All these, and many other kindred, problems are manifestly not, either in nature or extent, problems

[1] Isa. xlv. 15. [2] Isa. lv. 8. [3] Job xi. 7.

of a character similar to those with which Euclid deals. They are problems illimitable and indeterminate. We neither know all the conditions necessary to their solution: nor, with regard to some of them, do we even know, with anything approaching to certainty, the kind of principles on which they may hereafter be solved. Attempted solutions never amount to more than reasonable probabilities: and what seems a probability to one man, to another man may seem an improbability. No demonstration, even of the primary article of faith, viz. the existence and personality of God, is so complete as to exclude all argument on the other side. Not a few persons, of both strong and humble mind, consider even this first and fundamental article of the Christian faith neither knowable, nor fathomable, by the present capacities of man. The very greatness of their idea of God, and their keen sense of the littleness of human knowledge, combine to render religious assurance impossible to them. There is no irreverence in such doubts as these: often such doubts are the offspring of singular modesty and profoundest awe. And when doubt is thus born of uncertainty concerning the Infinite and Incomprehensible; when it is the resolution not to profess to have solved problems which to the doubter seem, for the present, insoluble: surely condemnation of such doubt is the condemnation of the condemner, not of the condemned.

And when we pass from the profoundest and least fathomable propositions of religion—propositions such as those commonly made concerning the existence and attributes of God: propositions which both by their very nature and by the declarations of

Holy Scripture, obviously transcend the intelligence of man—when, I say, we pass down from these heights of undemonstrable doctrine to doctrines more level to our capacities: doctrines of what is called the "historic faith"—doctrines such as those connected with the Canon of Holy Scripture and the Life of Our Blessed Lord—even then we have not reached the region of mathematical demonstration, but only the region of historic evidence. And every one knows the difference between the kind of certainty generated in the mind by mathematical demonstration, and the kind of certainty generated by historic evidence.

Mathematical demonstration creates a clear and conclusive certainty: a certainty based upon the constitution of the human mind, and its necessary relation to universal facts. No jury is required to appraise the value of mathematical demonstration. The demonstration does not differ in value according to the progressive stages of human history. It does not depend on the veracity of the demonstrator: nor is it capable of being misunderstood by interpreters, or falsified by copyists. The certainty of mathematical demonstration is a certainty for all men; and at all times.[1]

The value of historic evidence, on the other hand, is a varying value. It differs at different ages and among different peoples. The chronicled testimony of a people in its childhood, and in a legendary age, is obviously neither of the same value, nor to be

[1] A similar course of argument applies to scientific or experimental certainty: *i.e.* a certainty which for all men and at all times may be demonstrated by experiment.

interpreted in the same fashion, as the testimony of a mature people in an advanced age: an age accustomed to put evidence to a complete and searching test. It is, moreover, clear that, even in the same age, the testimony of all men is not of equal value: no! not even when all alike are honestly endeavouring to testify to the truth. This is especially the case when their testimony relates to extraordinary and supernatural phenomena. Some minds are more prone to the acceptance of such phenomena than others. Impulse, excitement, admiration, friendship, hatred, emotions and affections of every sort, give a bias, though often unconsciously, to human testimony: so that, even regarding the ordinary events of yesterday, it is sometimes impossible to feel full assurance from the testimony of the most veracious narrators. How much more must this assurance be affected when the testimony is recorded of events which happened centuries ago; and are confessedly extraordinary and supernatural!

Such being the essential nature of historic evidence; there is obviously large room for divergence of opinion, and for the inflowings of doubt, concerning very many of the events resting on the witness of historical testimony. The debates on the character of crucial events, sometimes even on the actuality of the events; and the divergence of view concerning the significance rightly attaching to these events in our common, secular, histories: supply abundant evidence of the partial inconclusiveness of historical testimony, and *à fortiori* of the inconclusiveness of many of the deductions drawn by commentators on historical events.

There are, indeed, Christian believers who regard the sacred histories of their religion as protected from all possibility of error by the superintending care of the Inspiring and Infallible Spirit of God.[1] But the doubter asks for proof of this unfailing superintendence. He knows that some of the non-Christian religions claim for their sacred books the same kind of inspiration; at times in a higher degree, than Christianity claims for its holy volume. He knows that never since the Canon of the Old Testament was completed, has there at any time existed a consensus of opinion concerning its proper contents: that the Jews differed from the Samaritans concerning it, and that Roman Christians still differ concerning it from Christians who deny the supremacy of Rome. He knows that for at least three centuries after Christ the Canon of the New Testament was not settled: and that the manner of its settlement has been the subject of great debate and variety of opinion. He knows that not one original manuscript of any portion of the Bible is extant at the present day: that all the manuscripts we possess are only copies; and that in these copies there are many thousands of different textual readings. Considering, then, the partial inconclusiveness of all historical testimony—especially the testimony of a remote and early age—and also the great variety of textual readings, even in the most ancient manuscripts, to say nothing of modern translations: it is unquestionably clear that whatever protection God may have been pleased to extend to the Christian Revelation;

[1] It is often overlooked that Scripture nowhere makes such a claim for itself.

His protection has not been of such a character as to obviate differences of opinion either concerning the contents of the Bible, or the character of some of its teachings. The teachings of the Bible are, in no case, rigid demonstrations irresistibly compelling universality of assent:[1] while, in many instances, those teachings are deducible only from the correlation of divers passages—a correlation whose legitimacy may frequently, and not unreasonably, be called in question. Under these circumstances it would seem natural to anticipate, what indeed all experience proves to be the fact, that with regard both to the measure of Authority and the character of the teachings of Holy Scripture, there should exist much difference of opinion among earnest men: some believing doctrines which others, with equal honesty of conviction, most earnestly doubt.

Nor is this divergence of opinion in any degree really diminished—however it may seem to be apparently diminished—by yielding to the figment of an infallible guidance in the living Church; because, of all assertions, this assertion of an ecclesiastical, or papal, infallibility possesses least of the nature of absolute certitude. It has neither the witness of the balance of probability, nor of the testimony of history, far less the assurance of irresistible demonstration. For the balance of probability is clearly against the supposition that God would bestow upon an indefinite series of men (some evil, others good: some appointed to their ecclesiastical office by corrupt influences,

[1] Part, indeed, of the highest value of the Bible, considered as a manual of spiritual discipline, consists in the frequent absence of demonstration, and the spiritual probation resulting therefrom.

others by incorrupt) a perspicuity and certitude of utterance which they themselves, by proclaiming the necessity of tradition and of "the living voice" to interpret the Bible, disallow to the prophets and apostles originally inspired. And with regard to the testimony of history: few things can be regarded as more surely proven than the liability to error, both in morals and doctrine, of ecclesiastical persons, even though they be occupants of the papal chair. And that the dogma of ecclesiastical infallibility cannot be conclusively demonstrated is clearly seen from the circumstance that vast numbers of Christian people not only doubt, but altogether deny, it. The dogma is, at most, an opinion: an opinion greatly doubted and frequently denied: not an opinion, therefore, upon which other opinions can be built as upon a foundation unshifting and sure.

Thus, then, with regard to the great objects of Faith,—the existence, nature, and personality of God: the manner of redemption and the ultimate issue of God's providences: the future judgment and the life of the world to come; and the like—we possess no evidence which is of the nature of a mathematical demonstration; whatever evidence of other kinds we may, as we do, possess. The incomparable life of Our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ which is undoubtedly, and by far, the strongest evidence we possess of the truths of the Christian Religion, is yet a life resting on the witness of historical testimony; and, at its best, the certainty gendered in the mind by historic evidence is not certainty either of the same kind, or the same degree, as the certainty of mathematical demonstration. It is not a certainty which excludes

opposite opinions and arguments on the other side: not a certainty which compels acceptance, and renders the questionings and the hesitancy of doubt impossible.

Thus we see, I hope, the nature of the first great difference between absolute intellectual conviction and the convictions of faith. We can never be absolutely certain of anything, in the sense of intellectual certainty, of which we do not fully know both the entire nature and the complete conditions—and it is self-evident that we know neither the entire nature nor the complete conditions, either of those Divine personalities or that future human state, with which religion so largely deals. Whether we do not know enough for all purposes of practical conduct, and especially for purposes of faith, is quite another question. Our present point is simply this, that both the Eternity and Personality of God's Self-Existence, as well as the vast ultimate issues of His dealings with mankind, are so entirely incomprehensible, and unfathomable, by human intelligence on earth; that anything in the nature of mathematical demonstration concerning these transcendent verities —demonstration, *i.e.*, postulating a complete knowledge of the whole terms and conditions of the proposition enunciated—is altogether out of the question. And where absolute demonstration is impossible: hesitancy and questionings and doubt are, at times and with some persons, almost inevitable. In all such cases, therefore, doubt, far from being positively guilty, may be comparatively innocent: and far from meriting condemnation, most justly claims the treatment of kindness, and sympathy, and love.

(2) But, secondly, we find a further cause for the

great and essential difference between mathematical conviction and the convictions of faith. This cause lies in the very nature of faith itself. If faith became demonstrable certainty, it would cease to be faith. It is of the very essence of faith that the intellect should take something on trust. Without intellectual trust, spiritual belief is impossible. That which I know all about, makes no demand on faith ; at least not in the sense of religious faith. My confidence concerning that which is completely within my acquaintance and ken is the confidence of knowledge : not the confidence of faith. I do not believe a demonstration of Euclid ; I know it. Whatever can be assuredly proved to the complete satisfaction of the universal intellect of man, without leaving any opening for question or doubt, is not a matter of faith. Similarly, whatever is ascertainable by the senses of sight, or touch, or hearing, lies within the material sphere of bodily perception : not within the immaterial realm of faith. So also, whatever can be proved, at any moment, and attested by experiment of all men equally to be true, without reference to purity of heart and disposition of spirit, is not of the nature of faith. Faith, as I shall afterwards endeavour to shew, always implies, not only the presence of uncertainty and the possibility of doubt, but also a special disposition of heart, a peculiar motion of the will, a trustful and loving affection of man's inner personality ; above all, vision and apprehension by the spirit.[1]

But if faith, to any extent, depends either upon disposition or conduct, it clearly differs, in this respect,

[1] Cf. Chaps. II., V., and VII.

from intellectual certainty. My certainty that the three angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles is, in no way, influenced by the condition of my heart, and affections, and will. The demonstration of such a proposition is a matter for the intellect alone: and the intellects of all men alike who are capable of understanding the proposition are alike assured of its certainty; without any reference whatsoever to individual history or individual conduct.

It is not so with faith. The objects of faith do not compel the universal adoration, nor the propositions of faith the universal acceptance, of all men alike. The most cursory experience of human life bears witness to the truth of the Scriptural announcement that "all men have not faith."[1] Faith often seems to run in families: the members of some families appearing to be imbued with faith from their childhood; and, in later life, attaining to faith of a rich and wonderful power—although, it is not an uncommon experience to find, even in the same family, where the environment and upbringing have been in all instances the same, that some members of the family have great faith, others little or no faith; and that where all alike have had faith during childhood, in later life the faith of some is diminished and of others increased. On the other hand, and in other families, doubt and unfaith appear to be supreme. And whereas the children of believers are sometimes doubters; the children of doubters are sometimes believers.

There is, therefore, no such thing as universal

[1] 2 Thess. iii. 2.

faith in the abstract corresponding to the universality of assent to material facts ascertainable by the senses, or to general laws established by common experiment, or to mathematical propositions incapable of being denied. Faith always has some relation to the history and the character of the person believing. Its certitude is not, like sensible or intellectual certitude, mainly objective: but is both subjective and objective, depending partly on the inner affection of the believer and partly on the object of his belief.

The proof of this personal property inherent in faith may be seen in the common circumstance that two persons, of equal integrity, may have precisely the same evidence before them (let us say) of the existence of God or of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ: and the one will accept, while the other rejects it. Now what is the cause of the one rejection and the other acceptance; seeing that the evidence laid before both persons is exactly the same? Clearly the cause must lie in some difference in the persons, there being no difference in the evidence. And, as experience shews, the personal difference is often bound up very mysteriously, yet inseparably, with the history and the character of the believer on the one hand, and the doubter on the other.

When, through some internal energy, the believer has begun to believe, and the doubter has begun to doubt:—then external circumstances constantly minister nourishment, both to the increase of faith and the increase of doubt. But, in the beginning, both faith and doubt alike are closely connected with individual personality: and are not part of any universal system or law, at least not of any system

or law yet fully known to us. Doubt, like faith, is very largely a personal affair. As the faith of no two persons is exactly alike, either in measure or degree: neither do any two persons owe their doubts to exactly the same cause, or feel their doubts in exactly the same way. An element of individualism, or personality, is always intertwined with religious doubt. In dealing, therefore, with any man's religious doubts, we are dealing with a portion of that man's personality: so that not only common courtesy, but common justice also, requires that the same gentleness and delicacy of treatment should be shewn towards doubt as towards every other sacredly personal matter.

Yet it is a matter of common knowledge that multitudes of Christian people do not deal with religious doubt in the temper either of justice, or courtesy, or courage. They quake and grow querulous in the presence of doubt. They tilt at it with animosity, and bespatter it with hard and bitter names. They behave as men whose cause is weak; not strong. They are restless, and loud, and clamorous: as if they were Roman augurs defending divination by entrails. Imagine the man of science quaking and clamouring, in the presence of any doubt as to the law of gravitation! In sure certainty of the law, he behaves with the quiet confidence that becometh truth. And making all allowance for the fact that, unlike gravitation which is an impersonal truth, religion is both a personal affection and a personal truth, and therefore liable to stir the passions:—still the common temper of timidity, and intolerance, in which many Christian people approach the questions

of religious doubt, brings neither victory nor glory to their cause. It is a temper unworthy both of themselves and their Master Christ.

There seem to be at least three causes for the prevalence among Christians of this attitude of timid, and fretful, intolerance towards religious doubt.

(1) Many Christians are not sure of their ground. They do not really know Whom they have believed :[1] nor are they able to give an answer to every man that asketh the reason of the hope that is in them.[2] There are perhaps few things, and certainly nothing of similar moment, about which men give themselves so little trouble, and take such little pains, as the ascertainment, by strict examination, of the foundations and the evidences of their religion. Hence so many religious persons are like children who have not learned things accurately. They are fearful of being questioned : and are out of temper in an examination. When anything is asserted which runs counter to their belief : not knowing the grounds of their belief, they are unable to defend it. Like poor swimmers in turbulent waters, all that uninformed believers can do, amid the swellings of doubt, is to splash and to cry : and the very loudness of their crying is an evidence of their dread that they will sink. What is wanted is not to cry against the flood, but to learn to swim well : and manfully to breast the heaving waves till the firm shore is won.

(2) The second cause for the prevalence among Christians of the intolerant dread of religious doubt, is their failure in distinguishing what is essential to Christianity from what is non-essential. By the bad

[1] 2 Tim. i. 12. [2] 1 Pet. iii. 15.

theories of good men, Christianity has been falsely made responsible for opinions which are not only not necessary to its existence, but form no part whatever either of its original teachings or its actual life. There are few things in the world so extraordinary and phenomenal as the stupendous difference, frequently existing, between the teachings and methods of Christ; and the teachings and methods of multitudes of sincere Christians. It is not too much to say that an immense number of modern sermons and Christian books would be unintelligible to the Apostles (if we may judge from the character of the Apostles' own speeches and writings): and this not only because of their modern terminology, but also because of their non-Apostolic points of view. That living teachers have a clear right to accommodate and adapt the teachings of Christ, and His Apostles, to the needs of each differing country, and each succeeding age, cannot be denied. It is part of the purpose of their existence, and one obvious condition of their utility, that they should so adapt their teachings. But that they may place first what Christ placed last, or even said nothing of: this we may with good reason deny their right to do.

Yet the most cursory study of the phenomena of religious doubt will disclose the fact, that its attacks are mainly directed not against the essential teachings of Christ; but against non-essential theories, which dogmatists, with more bravery than truth, declare to be essential. The commonplace dogmas concerning the Sabbath, and the Bible, and the Sacraments, and Eternal Hope, and the Plan of Salvation, and even the disposal of the bodies of the dead, will furnish

abundant illustrations both of the vast breadth of the gulf which sunders the doctrines of modern Christendom from the doctrine of the Apostles: and also of the fact that it is chiefly against the non-essential accretions, and not against the essential roots of Christian faith, that the axe of religious doubt is laid. And until the essentials of Christianity have been disentangled from its non-essentials—*i.e.* until the faith of Christ is clearly distinguished from the opinions of Christians—there will continue to be good cause for the dread among Christians of religious doubt. For so long as the wheat of faith is falsely identified, in the imaginations of men, with the chaff of opinion; then if men see the wind scattering the chaff, they will falsely fear that it is carrying away the wheat also. But they in whom the mighty, rushing, fans of God the Holy Ghost have already winnowed the chaff from the wheat,[1] have nothing to dread from the further ordeals and winnowings of doubt. They know that although the husks of earthly opinion may be destroyed, the wheat of Heaven will still remain.[2]

(3) There is, however, a third cause for the irritation and hostility felt by many Christian people towards religious doubt. This is the temper and conduct displayed by many doubters towards religion: a temper quite as unworthy of true reason, as the temper of many believers is unworthy of true faith.[3] Doubters are often as narrow, and intolerant, in their dogmas

[1] Matt. iii. 11, 12. [2] John vi. 41.

[3] It would, *e.g.*, be difficult to name any Christian dogmatist whose attitude towards religious doubt has been more ungenerous than the attitude of Voltaire and Gibbon towards Christian faith.

of doubt, as are believers in their articles of belief. It should not be forgotten that as there is honest doubt, so also there is honest faith. And if believers ought to treat honest doubt with respect, so doubters ought to treat honest faith with respect also. To the true Christian, there is nothing so precious as the honour of Christ, and the sanctities of his most holy faith. Nothing, therefore, wounds and grieves him more painfully than any disrespect towards his Saviour, or unmannerliness towards his religion. In the past, Christians have been greatly to blame for the acrimony of their dealings with doubt, and doubters for their lack of delicacy in treating of religion. Surely, on both sides, there ought to be a more diligent cultivation of that charity without which neither reason nor faith is beautiful.

Whatever is not of charity, whether it be doubt or belief, is disproportioned and misshapen. Christianity without charity is nothing. The lack of charity has hitherto been among the greatest of all hindrances to the progress of the Christian Church. The lack of charity has also hitherto been among the most prolific of all causes of religious doubt. Similarly it has been the lack of charity among doubters which has led to the recriminations of Christians. And although Christians, by reason of their profession, are more bound than doubters to shew charity towards those who oppose themselves: yet, for the sake of human brotherhood, and in recognition of the unfathomable profundities of the great problems of life, and particularly of religious life, every earnest doubter should be tender, and generous, in his dealings with religion. The best doubters do, indeed,

display a beautiful charity towards the Christian faith. And believers would act wisely if, instead of being irritated into peevishness by the vanities of the worst kind of doubters, they emulated the charities of doubters of the best and most generous kind. Kindness not only often vanquishes doubt: it also crowns with laurels the brows of conquering faith.

More than this: seeing that doubt is no part of the general law of human existence—indeed as we shall hereafter see it runs clean contrary to those general laws[1]—and is, in every case, the offspring either of the doubter's special character or special circumstances: seeing also that, in the case of every doubter there is something personal and proper to that individual case (some constitutional bent; some intellectual or moral quality; some deep disquiet of soul, or sense of spiritual insecurity; some despair of Nature or reaction against superstition; some "yearning in desire to follow knowledge like a sinking star beyond the utmost bounds of human thought;" some overwhelming sorrow which has embittered the soul and extinguished the light of its hope; some absorbing temporal pursuit which has atrophied, and rendered impotent, the faculty of faith; or haply—for doubt, alas! is not always innocent—some great sin, or long series of little sins, which has grieved the Holy Ghost and shut out all nobleness of spiritual vision)—I say that, inasmuch as all religious doubt has invariably some personal element belonging to it—and oftentimes a most secret, most sensitive, most sacred personal element—therefore, in dealing with

[1] Cf. pp. 99–102.

religious doubt we are, I repeat, dealing not with something abstract, but with a personal matter touching the inmost parts of the personal life. Hence all rough generalizations, all sweeping denunciations, yea, all pretended universal panaceas and remedies for doubt are not only worthless: they are often cruel as well. By their clumsy coarseness of general assertion they irritate, and embitter, and lacerate, the personal doubting soul. They neither soothe, nor help, nor heal. As there is no general uniformity either in the origin or nature of doubt: so no general and uniform remedies can be applied with general and uniform success; especially if they be not applied in a spirit of large Christian kindliness, and allowance for diversities of belief, among the diverse personalities of mankind.

And besides all this, there remains a still further reason why religious doubt should be treated by Christian people with great considerateness and generosity. Doubt is often very painful to the doubter. There may, indeed, be instances in which doubt is most willingly, perhaps even eagerly, drunk in as an opiate drug to deaden the pangs of conscience, and to furnish a plausible excuse for leading a self-indulgent and irreligious life. There may be those who, resolving to own no other lord but self, and feeling an innate rebellion against the restraints of religion, snatch at every plausible plea for doubt: because doubt encourages their self-will, and strengthens their licentious pride, and ministers powerful anodynes to their spiritual uneasiness and pain. There may also be those to whom doubt is but a form of religious indifference:

indifference unaccompanied either by mental anguish or spiritual misery.

But assuredly religious doubt is not all either willing or painless. Much doubt is intensely, pathetically, painful: and altogether unwilling. Doubt comes at times to the noblest and most righteous of men, gashing and scorching their souls as with swords of fire: utterly blighting the tree of their life, and turning its beauty to ashes. To treat doubt of this kind as sin is to commit sin one's self: the sin of unchristian judgment, and hardness of heart. Not with hard judgment, but with tender sympathy, did Our Saviour Christ treat the doubts of His disciple St. Thomas. Nowhere in the Gospels is honest, earnest, painful doubt treated with cold condemnation: but always with generous charity. Over and over again Christ denounced His woes upon the Pharisees, the orthodox religionists of His day; whose assumptions of infallibility, and superior righteousness, and exclusive piety, roused His divine indignation. But never once did He denounce woe upon the Sadducees, the free-thinking doubters of His day, except when they were associated with the Pharisees in some act of hypocrisy; although the Sadducees often tempted Him by their questions, and although their denial of the existence of angels and spirits, and of man's immortality, was known by Him to be baseless and false. He earnestly bade His disciples beware of the leaven of the doctrine of the Sadducees: but Sadducean doubts He treated with the leniency due to error: error based upon absence of knowledge:[1] error involving the doubter in great spiritual loss, yet

[1] Matt. xxii. 29.

error flowing rather from the doubter's condition of mind than from his faults of heart.

And if Our Master Christ treated doubt with so great gentleness: patiently reasoning with doubters: lovingly, and not wrathfully, warning His own disciples against the infection of doubt—ought not believing Christians, in their treatment of doubt, most sedulously to copy their Master's example? Humbly thankful for their own gift of faith—for its light, and rest, and hope, and peace, and joy—they should be ever tender in their sympathies towards those who do not rejoice in so divine a possession. Like mariners safe in port, their hearts should enlarge towards those who, rudderless and anchorless, are tossing on dangerous waves: waves blackened with overhanging night, and unlit, perhaps, with a single star.

They, indeed, whose faith has never known the stress of darkness and of storm; whose spiritual path has always been easy, bright, and smooth; may possibly find themselves incapable of understanding either the difficulties of belief, or the overpowerings of doubt: and, in their lack of understanding, they may treat doubt with natural impatience, and well-meant severity. But they who have known what it is to be tossed in the darkness while longing for the day: whose faith is the reward of conflict and the prize of hard-won victory: whose Christianity has soared above the dull acceptance of creeds, into the realm of a vivid life hid with Christ in God: —they, at least, will cast no cruel stones at honest doubt, but will strive to treat it both with an intelligent understanding, and a generous sympathy.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF FAITH.

"God hath endowed us with different faculties, suitable and proportional to the different objects that engage them. We discover sensible things by our senses, rational things by our reason, things intellectual by understanding: but divine and celestial things He has reserved for the exercise of our faith, which is a kind of divine and superior sense in the soul. Our reason and understanding may at some times catch a glimpse, but cannot take a steady and adequate prospect of things so far above their reach and sphere. Thus by the help of natural reason, I may know there is a God, the first cause and original of all things; but His essence, attributes, and will are hid within the veil of inaccessible light, and cannot be discerned by us but through faith in His Divine Revelation."—*Pilgrim's Progress*, part iii.

IN common language the term "faith" is used with great largeness and variety of meaning: and St. Jerome affirms that, even in the Bible itself, the term is used in twenty-two different senses. Without lingering over all St. Jerome's niceties of distinction, we may, I think, discern at least five clear varieties in the Biblical use of the term "faith." (1) There is, first, the sense of consent, whether of the understanding or will, to a course of reasoning or a recital of events. When St. Paul, in his lodging at Rome, expounded to those who visited him the things concerning Jesus; we are told that "some believed the things which were spoken and some believed not."[1] Belief is here used in the sense of credence in the narrative, and

[1] Acts xxviii. 24.

consent to the reasoning. (2) Secondly, the term is used in the sense of fulness of moral persuasion. "Whatsoever is not of faith," writes St. Paul, "is sin."[1] Here faith evidently signifies complete, and unquestioning, confidence in the rightness of our course of action: a confidence so complete as to leave no room for conscientious misgiving, or doubt. (3) Thirdly, there is the use of the term in the sense of the body, or deposit, of Christian history and Christian doctrine. When we are told that Elymas the sorcerer sought "to turn aside" Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, "from the faith:"[2] "the faith," connotes the facts of Christian history, and the articles of Christian doctrine. This also is evidently the meaning of the term in such expressions as "I have kept the faith;"[3] "Contend for the faith once delivered to the saints;"[4] "have denied the faith;"[5] "have erred from the faith;"[6] and the like. (4) Fourthly, the term is used in the sense of seeing the Unseen, and laying hold of the Eternal. In this relation "faith" means the assurance of things hoped for, the test and proof of things not seen.[7] (5) Fifthly, "faith" often connotes in Scripture something more and higher than the vision of the invisible, and the apprehension of the infinite, and the realization of the eternal. For, in the bare sense of such believing, the devils believe and tremble.[8] And so, in the highest of its Biblical senses, faith signifies not only the vision of the invisible, the recognition of the omniscient, and the perception of the eternal: but also

[1] Rom. xiv. 23. [2] Acts xiii. 8. [3] 2 Tim. iv. 7.
[4] Jude 3. [5] 1 Tim. v. 8. [6] 1 Tim. vi. 10.
[7] Heb. xi. 1. [8] Jam. ii. 19.

devotion to the will of the Eternal, complete confidence in the decrees of the Omniscient, and ready obedience to the commandments of the Invisible. This last kind of faith, the faith of living trust accompanied by loving obedience, when exercised towards Christ, becomes the faith peculiar to, and distinctive of, Christian discipleship.

Such are some of the clear diversities of meaning in the Biblical uses of the term "faith." And if we proceed to restrict our examination to two only of these uses, viz. (*a*) faith in the sense of personal trust in the Unseen and obedience to the Eternal; and (*b*) faith in the sense of acceptance either of history or doctrine: we see at once how great is the essential difference in these two uses:—a difference commonly noted in Scripture by prefixing the definite article before the term "faith," when it signifies the deposit of history and doctrine, and omitting the article when the term is used to signify the spiritual quality of holy trust. Thus there is a great and manifest difference of meaning between "weak in faith and weak in the faith;"[1] between "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and the faith of Jesus;"[2] between "continuing in faith and continuing in the faith;"[3] between "fighting the good fight of faith, and contending for the faith once delivered to the saints."[4]

It is evident from passages such as these, that "the faith" signifies the body of Christian history and

[1] Rom. iv. 19; xiv. 1.
[2] Acts xx. 21; Rev. xiv. 12.
[3] 1 Tim. ii. 15; Col. i. 23.
[4] 1 Tim. vi. 12; Jude 3. Cf. article in the *Expositor*, February, 1895, pp. 143–152.

doctrine: commonly called the articles of the Christian Creed. In Apostolic times these articles were comparatively simple and few. The Apostles' Creed contains certainly all, and perhaps in the clause concerning Christ's descent into Hades more than all, the articles of Christian faith distinctly formulated in Apostolic times. All other Creeds and Confessions of Faith, however reasonably and logically they may seem to be deduced from Holy Scripture, are no part of the formulated faith of the Apostles. They are the deductions of men, and like all other human deductions which are not mathematically certain, and which by their very nature do not exclude all arguments on the other side, these post-Apostolic reticulations and developments of doctrinal faith have opened many doors for debate and doubt. With few exceptions all Christians are in agreement on the Apostles' Creed, as they are in agreement on the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. It is not so much concerning the simplicities of Apostolic doctrine, as upon subsequent definitions and accretions, that religious doubt in modern days has chiefly arisen.

In the first instance these accretions and definitions were intended to be defences of the Gospel: but the experience of centuries of Christian history has shewn them to be quite as frequently floodgates of doubt, as bulwarks of faith. Clear definitions may be helpful to the faith of the ignorant: but to the faith of the enlightened they are often a stumbling-block. As knowledge grows from more to more, it is not improbable (judging from the religious history of the nineteenth century) that elaborate reticulations, and

precise definitions, of religious doctrines will grow increasingly more harmful, and less helpful, to the cause of Christian faith. "A certain degree of *indistinctness* appears inseparable from that vastness of conception, which arises out of the more extended knowledge of the works of the Creator. A more expanding and comprehensive philosophy increases the distance between the Omnific First Cause and the race of man. All that defines seems to limit and to circumscribe the Deity." [1]

It is, indeed, a remarkable and hopeful characteristic of modern religious doubt that it finds less difficulty in soaring into realms of vast, and mysterious, expansions of faith; than in settling down to ecclesiastical limitations and definitions of it. It is not against the facts of the faith, however dim and transcendent those facts may be; so much as against theological opinions, and dogmatic assumptions, and ecclesiastical definitions, that belligerent doubt wages its most determined war, and quiescent doubt makes its most passive resistance. Not against the Atonement, but against forensic views of it; not against Inspiration, but against mechanical explanations of it; not against Eternal Judgment, but against material heavens and material hells — the deepest religious doubt sets its face.

There is, however, a species of religious doubt deeper, and more sad, than the doubt which makes war against the traditional definitions of doctrine which may be regarded as only outworks of the Christian citadel. This is the doubt which undermines, and dissolves, the foundation, of the very citadel

[1] Milman's "Christianity," ii. 353.

itself. For Christ is Himself the citadel of Christianity. Without faith in Christ it is impossible to be a Christian. Concerning various articles of "the faith of Jesus," where the term "faith" is used in the sense of doctrinal statement (especially when those statements are post-Apostolic and traditional) men may find themselves frequently beset with doubts, and yet continue Christians: but faith toward Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sense of personal trust and confidence in Him, is an essential of Christianity. For how can they be Christians who do not believe that Christ is? Personal faith in the Invisible Christ is the very life of Christianity.

But what is the nature of this faith—this personal trust in the Invisible Christ—which is the prime essence, the indispensable first principle of the Christian religion? Upon examination, this personal trust in the Invisible Christ will, I think, shew itself to be something more than an acceptance of the deposit of Christian history and precept; something intimately associated with the very nature and constitution of man himself. To rightly apprehend the nature of faith, it is then, first of all, necessary to rightly apprehend the constitution of man. Without a clear knowledge of the constitution of man, it is impossible to have a clear knowledge of the nature of Faith.

Now man's constitution is commonly divided into two parts: body and soul. By "the body" is denoted everything in man which is material and mortal; by "the soul" everything immortal and immaterial. But the more complete and perfect classification of the several parts of man's constitution would seem to be;

not the common twofold classification, but the remarkable threefold classification of St. Paul, himself both a philosopher and psychologist. According to St. Paul, each whole man is composed of three constituent parts:—body, soul, and spirit.[1] In this Pauline trichotomy, or threefold division of man's nature, the "body" would seem to be the material part of man: the "soul" man's intellectual, moral, and emotional part; the "spirit," the super-sensuous and hyper-psychical part of man.[2]

It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to give anything like a precise definition of each of these three several parts of man's nature: or to describe with perfect accuracy the boundaries of the physical, psychical, and spiritual provinces in man respectively. For these several parts of man, though theoretically distinguishable from each other, are yet so intimate, and inter-related, as to make impracticable the drawing of any sharp line of demarcation between them. The psychical man, however, seems to be the middle term between the physical and spiritual man: touching both, yet distinct from both.

Moreover, each of these parts of man's triune nature has its own proper and peculiar faculties. The faculties of the body are mainly motion, and sense. The faculties of the soul are mainly thought and feeling. The faculties of the spirit, although various, may be summed up, for the moment, in the

[1] 1 Thess. v. 23.

[2] In the Anglican Burial Service both the twofold and threefold classification of man's constituent parts are recognized in the prayer beginning: "Almighty God, with Whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with Whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh," etc.

one generic term, "faith."[1] Or, in other words, the faculties of the body are sensible; of the soul, mental and moral; of the spirit, wholly religious and divine.

It should also be observed that in any individual man, and even in many men, either the sensible, or the mental, or the moral faculties may be deficient, or feeble, and to a large extent even absent altogether: but in the wholeness of every complete, and perfect, man, these faculties are all present in co-existing, and co-operating power. So likewise, in any individual man, or even in many men, the spiritual faculty may be weak or largely wanting: yet, none the less, in the complete and perfect man there is the spirit-faculty of Faith, just as there is the soul-faculty of Reason, and the body-faculty of Sense. And it is no proof of the non-existence of the faculty of Faith, that all men do not believe; any more than it is a proof of the non-existence of the faculty of Sight, that all men do not see: or of the non-existence of the faculty of Reason, that some persons cannot think. The proof of the existence among men of the faculty of sight is that there are those who see: of the faculty of reason that there are those who think: and of the faculty of faith that there are those who believe. The complete man is the man who possesses all these faculties in their completeness.

We observe, moreover, that each of the three faculties of sight, reason, faith, depends for its operations on its own particular organ. It is impossible to see without an eye, or to think without a soul, or to believe without a spirit. A stone cannot see; a vegetable cannot think; and brutes, though often

[1] Cf. p. 37.

possessing splendid instincts—instincts near akin to reason and moral consciousness—yet, being void of the spiritual organ, have no capacity for the discernment of spiritual things. But in man, there subsist together the three constituent parts of body, soul, and spirit: and, through the instrumentality of their respective organs, man is capable of exercising the triple functions of sense, and reason, and faith.

The question naturally arises whether the functions of body, and soul, and spirit, are distinct and separable functions: or whether they are so intimately associated with each other as to be practically indivisible. In approaching such a question all speculations and anticipations of the mind are entirely useless, and generally misleading. The only true method of dealing with such a question is carefully to observe the facts of the case; and to endeavour so to interpret these facts as to bring them into harmony with each other, and with the whole case.

Now it is evident that the manifested functions of the body are various—being such as sight, hearing, smell, taste, and the like. Any single one of these manifestations may exist apart from the others. A man, *e.g.*, may see without hearing, and feel without smelling. But if the central sensorium be stunned or paralysed; then the man becomes absolutely void of every manifestation of sense whatsoever: he can neither feel, nor smell, nor hear, nor see. Thus there would appear to be an indivisible unity for all the senses: with a considerable diversity of external manifestations.

Similarly with the functions and manifestations of the soul: they are evidently various and composite.

The soul shews itself in the display of hope, and fear, and imagination, and will, and personal affection, and judgment, and the like. And experience teaches that any, or several, of these soul-manifestations may be wanting in a man. A man may hope without fearing, and imagine without willing, and love without judging: but if he had no soul at all, he could do none of these things:—as is proved by the universal fact that purely material organisms, such as vegetables, are universally lacking in soul-manifestations of every kind.

So also with the spirit. The manifestations of the spirit are various. They are such as the following: realization of the Unseen, conscience towards God, worship of the Eternal, reverence for the All-Holy, trust in the Omnipotent, awe of the Ever-Watching Judge, love of the Ever-Helping Father, self-sacrifice for the brethren in imitation of the self-sacrifice of Christ; and the like. But a man may be deficient in any of these manifestations of the spirit: or he may be more deficient in them at one time than at another: or he may be eminent in some, and lacking in others. But if he were entirely void of the organ of the spirit: he would be entirely void also of every spiritual manifestation: as is the universal case with brutes which, having no spirit, have neither realization, nor love, nor dread, of the Eternal and Invisible.

It would seem, therefore, that as the bodily senses have a central unity, but diversity of manifestations: so also the soul is a unity, and the spirit a unity, though the manifestations of soul, and of spirit respectively, are as diverse as the manifestations of sense. It should also be added that these three unities of sense, soul,

and spirit, together form, and are inseparable from, the great unity of the *ego*, or personal whole, of each composite man: so that the same man can say "I see," and "I think," and "I believe;" albeit he sees through his sensible organ, and thinks by means of his soul, and believes through the agency of his spirit.

But is the sense-unity, and the soul-unity, and the spirit-unity each distinct, and separable, from both, or either, of the other two? It is obvious that fractions of each of these unities are separable from the other unities. A man may see without either thinking or believing; he may think without either seeing or believing; and he may believe without either seeing or thinking. But seeing is only a fraction of the sense-faculty, and thought of the soul-faculty, and faith of the spirit-faculty. And what is obviously true of fractions of these faculties: is just as obviously not true —or at least is unproved—of the entire units of these faculties. For whatever may be the conditions of man's composite existence in future states of being; no instance has ever been known, in man's present state, of thought existing in the entire absence of every sense of the body;[1] or of every bodily sense existing without the existence of some faculty of soul; or of the spiritual faculties existing in the utter absence of all the soul-faculties.

The interpretation of these most apparent facts would seem to be that; although body, soul, and spirit, is each in itself an unity: yet is it not, in our present condition of being, an independent unity. Each unity depends for the fulness of its operations

[1] In sleep, the senses are dormant, but not absent.

on the assistance of the others. In theory, each unity is conceivably separate from the others: but under the actual conditions of man's present embodied state the three unities are very intimately combined.

Moreover, we observe, that the body is the lowest of the three unities: soul, next in the scale: spirit, highest of all. And in this ascending scale, each lower faculty ministers food and fuel to the faculties above itself: and each higher faculty ministers education and delight to the faculties below itself. Thus the bodily senses feed, and inflame, the soul. They carry in, from the outer world, to the inward soul impressions to nourish thought, and to incite affection. The bodily senses, indeed, are the only channel of communication at present open to man for intercourse with the outer world. Without them, man would be cut off from all demonstrable intercourse between himself and the world without. An unembodied soul may, perhaps, be able to communicate with the world: but, without sensible manifestation, the world cannot be demonstrably sure of its communications with unembodied souls. The senses, therefore, are essential to man's intercourse with the world, and with his fellowmen. It is through the medium of the senses that impressions are carried from the world into the soul: and ideas are carried forth from the soul into the world. That the soul can exist apart from the body we know upon the highest of all authorities.[1] But existence is one thing: and manifestation of existence is another. And, in our present stage of being, it is evident that the existence of the soul is not only

[1] Luke xii. 20.

manifested, but also nourished and illuminated, through the instrumentality of the senses.

In like manner the soul-faculty ministers nutriment, and illumination, to the faculty of the spirit. The soul carries in to the spirit great store of thought, and light, and beauty, and strength. The visions of the spirit are confirmed by the evidences of reason. The affections of the soul co-operate with the hopes and adorations of the spirit. Spiritual dread is confirmed by rational fear. Worship is intensified by will. And the whole of what is called "rational religion," is the operations of the spirit; confirmed, nourished, and illuminated by the ministrations of the soul.

And as each lower faculty in man ministers sustenance and warmth to each higher faculty; so each higher faculty ministers beauty and delight to each lower faculty. Every emotion and ratiocination of the soul of man is rendered a thousandfold more beautiful, and glorious, when bathed in the splendours of the spirit. And the senses of man would be nothing better than brutishness, were they not purified and ennobled by the understanding and the emotions of the soul.

Thus it appears that, although each constituent part of man is distinguishable from the two other parts, yet, in this mortal life, no part is independent of the other parts: each lower part ministers strength and light to the higher parts, and each higher part ministers loveliness and joy to each lower part.

The same laws of inter-relation will be found to hold good if, instead of considering each constituent element in man—body, soul, and spirit—in

its wholeness : we select, from the whole number of bodily faculties, the faculty of sight : and from the whole number of soul-faculties, the faculty of reason : and from the whole number of spirit-faculties, the faculty of faith. Sight is the light of the body ; reason the light of the soul ; faith the light of the spirit. As man has sensible sight : so also has he rational sight, and spiritual sight. And each of these forms of sight is auxiliary and assistant to the others. Bodily sight helps reason ; and mental sight helps faith. At times, indeed, reason can dispense with the aid of bodily sight. It can grasp the idea of a law, without the illustrations of experiment ; or the idea of a mathematical theory, without any pictorial delineation. But as a rule this is not so. As a rule, reason, and especially at its earliest dawn in the age of childhood, is largely educated by the faculty of bodily sight. A child delights in a picture before it grasps an idea : it can rejoice in a far-spreading landscape before it can apprehend the spaces of infinitude. But what it sees, greatly helps it, in the long run, to apprehend what it does not sensibly see ; but only rationally perceives. Thus bodily sight ministers to reason.

In like manner, reason ministers to faith. At times, indeed, faith seems independent of reason : by one mighty leap it reaches its goal, without the aid of reason : by one single beat of its unaided wings it mounts to its nest on high, amid the Unseen and Eternal rocks. But as a rule this is not so. As a rule, it is slowly, and with the mighty help of reason, that faith reaches its noblest heights, and is trained to the achievements of its most arduous enterprises.

By understanding the evidences of religion, our religion becomes more stable and more sure. By the ladders of reason we are greatly assisted in mounting to the loftiest pinnacles of faith. The more truly I reason about spiritual things from premises that are true, the more robust and immovable will my faith become. Although faith is the spiritual lord of reason: yet reason is the most powerful servant of faith.

We observe, moreover, that none of the three great faculties of sight, reason, faith—taken by itself, is absolutely infallible. The higher faculties are often necessary to correct the mistakes of the lower: and the lower are necessary to chasten the errors of the higher. In the realms of the sensible, the intellectual, and the spiritual faculties, each alike, there are vain semblances and false appearances of truth: which can only be dispersed, and made to vanish, by the aid of one or both of the other faculties. My sight, *e.g.*, left to itself, would often deceive me. It would tell me that the mirage in the desert is a well of living water: that the rainbow is a solid arch of accessible light: that the will-o'-the-wisp on the treacherous bog is the candle of home: that a straight staff in clear water becomes crooked. But the higher faculty of reason corrects these vain illusions of sight. When my sight is inclined to play me false; then my reason steps in, and guides me into truth.

So also in respect of the relationships of reason to faith. Faith is necessary to dispel the illusions of reason: as reason is necessary to dispel the illusions of sight. For there are illusions of reason just as there are illusions of sight. Pleasure is the

mirage of reason, and material knowledge its rainbow of apparently abiding light. And but for the corrective agency of faith we should be deceived by these illusions of reason ; as, but for the corrections of reason, we should be deceived by the illusions of sight.

If, however, the agency of the higher faculties in man is necessary to dispel the illusion of the lower faculties : so also the agency of the lower faculties is necessary to chasten the errors, and extravagances, of the higher faculties.

One great difference, indeed, between faith and superstition seems to be that, whereas superstition believes both *against* reason and *against* sense : faith, although it transcends, never violates, these lower faculties. Man may believe, all Christians do believe, *above* their senses and *above* their reason — their faith carries them into a realm of things unseen and undemonstrable—but to believe against sense, and against reason, is not faith but superstition. It is the work of faith to spiritualize both the senses and the reason—to reduce both reason and sense to their right proportion in the scale of human life—but to believe against the senses and against reason is both senseless and irrational. Truth, absolute truth, the surest truth knowable to man, is the truth to which sense, reason, and faith combine to give their consentient witness. Such a truth, to take the most splendid example, is the truth of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. For to this truth the senses, and the reason, and the faith, of the Apostles combined to furnish a triple testimony :—their senses when they saw and heard the Risen Lord ; their reason when

they argued that, both from the integrity of His own promises and the very nature of things, it was impossible that He should be holden of death;[1] and their faith when, after His Ascension, though they no longer saw Him, yet believing in Him, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.[2]

To sum up, then, this section of our enquiry. Faith is the greatest and highest faculty of man. Its organ, the instrument by which it works, is the spirit. As sight works through the body, and reason through the soul, so faith works through the spirit. These three organs and faculties of man rise in an ascending scale; through the carnal and material upward to the rational and intellectual; and thence, by a still higher ascent, to the spiritual and divine. Each of the lower faculties is intended to minister to that which is higher; sight to reason, and both sight and reason to faith. And, although the capacities of each higher faculty transcend the capacities of the lower—thus bringing about the right relationship and proportion between the several parts of man's composite being—yet no one faculty so transcends the others as to render those others either useless, or false, or absurd. However true anything may appear to one faculty; yet if it be, deliberately and consistently, declared false by the other two faculties, it is impossible to hold it as a truth. The surest truth which man is capable of receiving on earth is such truth as possesses the consentient testimony of the combined faculties of his composite nature—the three faculties of sight, and reason, and faith.

[1] Acts ii. 24. [2] 1 Pet. i. 8.

All truths, however, are not of such a nature as to be capable of receiving this combined witness of sensible, intellectual, and spiritual testimony: though, upon examination, more religious truths will be found to be of this nature than is commonly supposed. I mean that religion actually possesses more evidence in the body, and in the soul, and in the spirit of man, taken altogether in their threefold unity; than the world at large seems to be practically aware of. And one reason why so many persons seem unaware of this frequently recurring triple testimony to religious truths is that, in each of man's lower faculties there seems to be ingrained an invincible disposition to rebel against, and usurp, the authority of the higher faculties. Without entering into the question of the origin of this rebellious disposition, it is abundantly clear that the disposition is practically universal. There is an evident tendency in the body to claim for itself precedence over the soul; and in the soul to claim precedence over the spirit. The appetites of the body rebel against the admonitions of reason: and the appetites of reason against the pleadings of faith. What can be more sure, according to the shewings of reason, than that virtue conduces to happiness, and vice to misery: and yet what is more common than for the sensuous parts of man to defy, and fly in the face of, these authoritative announcements of reason? In like manner what can be more sure to the vision of faith than that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him:[1] and yet what more common than the rebellions of the soul against these declarations of the spirit?

[1] Heb. xi. 6.

In this sense, therefore,—the sense of appetite and inclination and desire for dominion, it must be allowed that there is little agreement between the several parts of man: the flesh lusteth against the soul, and the soul against the spirit. Sensuality tramples on reason: and reason violates faith. Yet notwithstanding this internecine conflict, of which every good man is painfully conscious in himself; still, for all practical purposes, the statement holds good that, in respect of many religious truths, there is a concord of testimony in the body and soul and spirit alike. Sense, and reason, and faith, unite to give their witness on behalf of religion: though each gives its witness in its own department, and according to its own powers of perception.

Moreover, every faculty of man has its own proper department of operation. The department in which the senses work is the material world: the department of the soul is the ethical, emotional, and intellectual world: the department of faith is the world of the spirit. It is largely owing to the want of distinctness in the apprehension of these several worlds of matter, mind, and spirit; that so great confusion has arisen respecting the nature of faith. The spirit has a world all its own: a world in which it lives, and moves, and has its being. And, what it is now essential to observe is the fundamental fact, that the things of this spiritual world can only be spiritually discerned.[1] You cannot discern intellectual things by sensible powers of perception: you can neither taste, nor see, nor handle them. In like manner, spiritual things cannot be discerned by mere

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

emotion or mere intellect: *i.e.* you cannot prove them by sentiment alone, or demonstrate them by argument alone. It is only by faith—faith which is the organ of the spirit—that spiritual things can be truly discerned and fully realized.

Sight and reason may, each in its own department, prepare the way for faith. They each may give evidence of their own in support of faith. But the organ by which spiritual things are ultimately, and conclusively, apprehended is the organ of the spirit. Neither the natural (*i.e.* the physical or animal) man, nor the intellectual man, can of itself discern the things of the spirit. The full knowledge of spiritual things enters man's being neither through the avenues of sense, nor of reason: but only through the spirit. As sensible things are sensibly discerned, and intellectual things intellectually: so, in their depth and glory, spiritual things are discerned spiritually. It is not to the eyes and ears, nor to the mind and reason, but to the spirit of man, that the Spirit of God makes known the deep things of God.[1] Sight and reason may contribute food and strength to faith: but faith is a faculty by itself, super-sensible and super-rational. It is the faculty which gives substance to immaterial things, and conviction concerning things unseen and eternal.[2]

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives a numerous variety of illustrations setting forth this distinctive nature of the faculty of faith. By our senses we perceive the material existence of the worlds: by our reason we know that the worlds neither made themselves, nor have been always in

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 9–16. [2] Heb. xi., *passim*.

existence: but it is by the separate faculty of faith, that we understand, says the inspired writer, that "the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." And not only is the distinctive separateness of the faculty of faith made evident by the mere fact of its ability to perceive things imperceptible either by sense or reason: but it is made evident also by the still further fact that faith frequently comes in conflict both with sight and reason; and, in the struggle, proves itself the strongest faculty of the three. What, *e.g.*, could appear more senseless, and irrational, than for Noah to begin preparing his huge ark years before there was any visible, or logical, cause for his dread of an approaching flood? What more senseless and irrational than that Abram, at the bidding of a supernatural voice, should leave home and fatherland; and "go out, not knowing whither he went"? What more contrary both to experience and reason than that Sara should have a son, when ninety years of age; and all because, after her momentary infidelity, she "judged Him faithful that promised"? What more senseless or irrational than that Abraham should lift up his hand to slay his only son: or that Moses should cast away his royal opportunities in Egypt: and refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"? If there were no future life perceptible to faith, no world invisible to soul and sense, though clearly visible to the spirit; the lives and deaths of all the afflicted prophets and martyrs and saints

would have been senseless lives, and irrational deaths. But their choice of an afflicted life, and their willingness to endure a death of torment, rather than yield to the allurements of sense and the persuasions of reason, is an evidence, a proof, that there was in them some faculty distinct from both reason and sense : a faculty vanquishing both reason and sense by the greatness of its strength, and the clearness of its vision. This faculty is faith. Faith is the power, the gift, by which men look at things not seen ; and bring all things temporal into their due relations of subservience to things eternal.

This, then, is the rational proof, so far as a spiritual fact can be rationally demonstrated, of the existence of the organ of the spirit, and the faculty of faith. It is with faith very much as it is with love. Love is best demonstrated by its operations and its fruits. A man says "I love." You ask him to show and prove his love. But the only way he has of making manifest the existence and strength of his love is by the things which love inspires him to do, and to overcome, and to suffer : things which, without love, he could neither endure, nor conquer, nor accomplish. But if, after these outward and visible testimonies of his inward and invisible affection, any one should persist in denying the existence either of the sentiment of love in the abstract, or of his own personal possession of it :—then there is nothing more that the man can do. He cannot by any irresistible demonstration of logic, and apart from the fruits of love, compel any one to acknowledge the existence of love who is inwardly unconscious of its power.

Similarly with the organ of the spirit, and the faculty of faith. When an honest, truthful, sober-minded man tells you he is conscious of the organ of his spirit, just as he is conscious of his understanding and senses: when he shews you what he is able to suffer, and to do, through the power of this faculty of faith—and history is very rich in testimony to the wonderful fruits and operations of faith—if, after all, any one should reply that, for himself, he is unconscious of any such spiritual organ; and (as though a blind man were to deny that others can see) should proceed to deny the faculty of faith and the vision of the invisible:—then, there is nothing more that you can do. As a man without reason is out of sympathy with reasoning men, so a man without faith is out of sympathy with believing men. And, apart from the fruits of our faith, there is no other evidence we can give of its existence in us. We cannot draw a diagram of God; or prove immortality by any resistless syllogism.

In returning, however, to the several relations to each other of sight, and reason, and faith; we observe that the subservience of things sensible, and rational, to things spiritual, and eternal; is not anything more than the subservience of due proportion and right relationship. It is not the subservience of defeated, and irreconcileable antagonists. When sight and reason are doing their proper work—without attempting to overthrow faith and usurp its prerogatives—there is neither contradiction nor conflict between them and faith. Neither reason nor faith contradicts sense in anything exclusively sensible:

neither sense nor faith contradicts reason in anything purely rational: neither reason nor sense contradicts faith in anything purely spiritual. In its own plane and sphere, considered independently of the two other spheres and planes, each faculty is supreme.

But, with regard to man, it is scarcely possible to consider independently the several planes of his sensible, and rational, and spiritual existence: because these planes border so closely on each other, nay, so constantly intersect each other, as to render independent consideration exceedingly difficult. Each of the three faculties of sense, reason, and faith is, in man during his residence on earth, so intimately related to the other two, that the important matter to observe is, not so much the separateness of their existence; as their due order of precedence, and their several claims to authority.

How, then, do we determine that faith is a faculty higher than reason? Just as we determine that reason is higher than sight. The world of sight is a material world: the world of reason often supermaterial. Moreover reason can perceive things imperceptible by sight. Hence sight is lower than reason. Similarly reason is lower than faith. For the world of reason is mainly a temporal world: the world of faith very largely an eternal world. Moreover faith can, and does, perceive things undemonstrable to reason. Hence reason is a faculty lower than faith.

Thus, in order of precedence, reason ranks higher than sight, and faith than reason: and, therefore, the spirit, which is the organ of faith, is higher than the soul, which is the organ of reason; just as the soul,

the organ of reason, is higher than the body, the organ of sense. And the several claims to authority of these several organs, and faculties, in man, are in proportion to their rank and precedence. The spirit, therefore, has higher claims to authority than the soul: and the soul than the body. Faith also is more authoritative than reason, and reason than sight. While, therefore, in its own proper plane of operation, each of the three faculties of sight, reason, and faith is independent: yet their independence is so essentially federal that, in order to ascertain the depth and fulness of religious truth, each can claim the assisting alliance of the other two. But, in the settlement and determination of religious truth: the supreme authority, in the united federation of man's threefold nature, belongs, both by virtue of capacity and rank, to the faculty of faith.

This supremacy of faith is essential to all true religious life. The religious life is the life which breathes the atmosphere of faith: and walks by the light of faith: and feeds on the food supplied by faith: and conquers all foes in the strength of faith. Every complete man lives on earth a triune life. First, he lives the life of sense: the life of corporeal necessity, and corporeal delight. Secondly, he lives the life of reason: the life of intellectual authority, and intellectual joy. Thirdly, he lives the life of religion: the life of spiritual vision, and spiritual blessedness. In the retention of these three elements of life, in their due proportion and relationship, consists the completeness of man's existence on the earth. None of these elements or faculties of man's life can be too greatly or too highly developed—so long as it

is developed harmoniously, and in due relationship, with the other two. But any disturbance of the right proportion of these elements to each other, whether in the direction of deficiency or excess, is an infringement of the completeness of man's earthly life. On the one hand, the excess of the corporeal life is sensuality: of the rational life, irreligion: of the religious life, superstition. On the other hand, the deficiency of the corporeal life is asceticism: of the rational life, foolishness: of the religious life, worldliness. In the complete human life there is a harmonious coexistence of body, soul, and spirit; with the due allegiance of body to soul, and of soul to spirit: yet without any outrage of faith against reason, or reason against sight.

This, then, we take to be the nature of faith, when the term "faith" is used in the Bible without the definite article. Faith is a distinctive faculty operating in a world of its own, the world of spirit: whereas *the* Faith is, generally though not always, a series of formulated statements, or doctrines, concerning the inhabitants, the laws, the character, of the spiritual universe. Faith is a personal faculty, a spiritual glimpse of things unseen: *the* Faith is the body of religious formulæ, the dogmas of belief. Christian faith is the vision, the personal realization of the invisible, personal Christ: *the* Christian faith is the sum of the articles of the Creed of the Christian Church concerning the person, and teachings, of Christ.

It is self-evident, therefore, that there is, as a rule, a very broad, yea, quite vast, distinction between faith regarded as a faculty, and faith regarded as a

Creed. The articles of the Christian Creed differ enormously from each other, both in the character of their foundation, and in their redemptive value. And if the articles of the Creed are of varying values: *à fortiori* the opinions of Christians are different in importance. The various theories of inspiration, *e.g.*, are merely theories and opinions of men. None of them has any clear, or sure, foundation in Scripture —Scripture itself being altogether silent as to any exclusive method of divine inspiration. No theory of inspiration, therefore, possesses any redemptive value. A man may be eternally saved, without believing in verbal inspiration: and eternally lost, notwithstanding such a belief. So likewise with very many other opinions of Christians and articles of the Christian Creed: articles such as those concerning predestination, and free-will, and the operation of a Sacrament, and the Authority of the Church, and the like. Such articles are unquestionably most important, and exercise a powerful influence not only upon methods of ecclesiastical discipline and organization: but also upon the development of Christian character and Christian conduct. Yet none of these articles is of a nature so essential to the Christian life that any man can be rightfully refused the title of "Christian" who doubts, or disbelieves them. All such articles are obviously matters of opinion: and although they claim to be deductions from Scripture, yet they are nothing more than deductions: deductions depending for their existence upon reason, and reason applied to a given arrangement of Scriptural texts. And inasmuch as different reasons bring different men to different conclusions; and Scriptural

texts when variously co-ordinated, and arranged, appear to lend their authority to different doctrines; we find, as a matter of experience, that articles of religious faith which are mere deductions from Scripture, share the fate of all the opinions and theories of mankind: they lack universality of assent, and unanimity in acceptance; and are perpetually liable to be assailed by the inroads of doubt.

Moreover, with respect to those articles of the faith which are not so much in the nature of well-argued deductions from premisses of Scripture, as of supernatural occurrences possessing the testimony of history, articles such as the Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord: it is necessary, even in these instances, to clearly discriminate between faith itself, and the historical testimony to the faith. The historical testimony to the faith stands on the same foot as all other historical testimony. As far as the faith is historical; its standards of credibility, and claims to acceptance, are the same as those of other history. But faith, in the essence of it, is never simply and purely historical. Parts of *the evidences* of our faith belong to the domain of history: but faith itself is never merely historic. To each believer faith is a present personal matter: an individual vision of some actual and abiding reality: the substance for him, his own evidence, of eternal hope. Faith is not transferable. Every man's faith is exclusively proper to that man. He cannot bestow *his* faculty on any one else: or give it to another. Each person must have his own faith: or no faith at all. Just as every one must have his own senses or no sense at all, and his own intellect or no intellect at all: so must he have his own faith,

or no faith. I cannot give to another my sight or my reason: neither can I give him my faith. I can tell another what I see: but I cannot see it for him. I can explain to another what I understand: but I cannot understand it for him. In like manner I can declare to another what I believe—*i.e.* what I see with the eye of my spirit, and understand with the understanding of my spirit—but I can in no wise believe it for him. However earnestly and solemnly I may declare my spiritual convictions to him, yet unless he has faith of himself (the gift of God) he can neither discern nor accept what I declare.

That others believe a thing is no sufficient, and conclusive, reason why we ourselves should believe it: any more than it is enough to make us think a thing, that others think it. But if many others, and these among the most intelligent and wise, think a thing: their thinking is a proof that the thing is thinkable. It is also enough to make us pause, before we either question, or reject, their opinion. And the greater the number of those who think a thing, and the greater their recognized wisdom, the greater is our own need of enquiring and reflective care in rejecting the thing: and also the greater our responsibility in doing so.

In like manner, if many others, and these among the most sober and meditative, believe a thing: their believing is a proof that the thing is credible. And the greater the number of those who believe a thing, and the greater their character for knowledge and reasonableness, the greater is the responsibility of those who deny, and reject, the thing believed. Of course A with faith has no right to say to B without

faith, that his unfaith is sin : for all such judgments belong to God alone. On the other hand, B who is without faith, cannot reasonably say to A with faith, that his faith is foolishness ; any more than a blind man can say to a seeing man that sight is mere fancy and imagination.

It is (if the word may be used) this *egoism*, or essential personal quality, inherent in all true faith ; which has rendered both appropriate and necessary to the two great œcumenical creeds of the Church, the egoistical form of expression. Both the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed begin, and often repeat, the verb in the first person : "I believe." In all true faith, the pronoun of the first person "I," is fully as important as the verb "believe." For true faith is a personal vision, a personal apprehension, a personal appropriation, a personal love, of the fact or person believed. Hence the very form of the wording of the two great Creeds is a personal, an egoistical, form.

In this respect these two Creeds greatly differ from General Confessions, and Articles of belief: Confessions and Articles which partake rather of the nature of religious opinions and arguments from Scripture ; than of personal realization of things invisible, or personal trust in and obedience to the Invisible God. In this respect also the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed greatly differ from the *Quicunque Vult,* or Creed commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius. There is no *Credo* in the Athanasian Creed. One of its ancient titles was *Hymnus Athanasii de Fide.* That is one of its best titles still. It is a song or psalm concerning the

faith. It is among the grandest of all the lyrics of faith. But it is a lyric, rather than a Creed. It contains forms of statement which have never been excelled for grandeur in their attempt to define the indefinable; but the appropriating, personal, pronoun "I" never once occurs in it. The essential egoism, or personal realization, of the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed, are altogether absent from the Athanasian Creed. It is a Confession of belief, a series of assertions, about which men may fairly argue, adducing evidences both of history and logic on the one side and the other; but it is not essentially a personal Creed like the two great Creeds which preceded it.

A clear distinction should also be made, not only between personal faith and believed opinions: but also between personal faith and the evidences of faith. Such a distinction is no mere theoretical distinction: it is a distinction of fact, a distinction piercing to the very marrow of religious doubt. The evidences of faith are evidences either of sense or reason: and although they may minister to faith, yet are they not of the nature of faith. Evidences operate on the senses and the soul of man; and inasmuch as his soul and senses are intimately related, in the completeness of his nature, to his spirit; these evidences are not without their influence on his spiritual nature. Yet just as evidences to the senses are not reason: so evidences to the reason are not faith. I may illustrate a proposition of Euclid by a figure sensible to the eye: and the figure, through its appeal to the sense of sight, may assist and strengthen my reason. But subtract reason, shew the figure to one void of understanding, and instantly the figure

loses its persuasive force: and, though still remaining a figure visible to sense, becomes a practical nullity to the man void of understanding.

Similarly with faith. The evidences of sense and reason may serve to increase and strengthen faith, where faith already in some degree exists: but they will not create faith, where faith is non-existent, or dead. The material and the rational universes—the fields of science and the domains of history—are rich in illustrations of spiritual verities, wherever there is faith, *i.e.* the faculty of spiritual vision, to behold them. To the vision of Christ, *e.g.* even the lilies of the field, and the common sparrows on the housetop, were beautiful illustrations of the good providence of God. On the other hand, not even the most extraordinary works of Christ, works which made very startling appeals to both their reason and their senses, were sufficient to compel those Pharisees, whose spirits were blinded, to discern His divinity.

There is, I repeat, unquestionably great power of persuasion in the evidences of religion, because those evidences appeal to some of man's most mighty faculties: the faculties of sense, and reason, and loyalty, and heroism. And the more constantly and wisely these evidences—whether chosen from the realms of sense, or science, or history, or logic—are brought before the attention of men; the more insuperable will become the difficulties attending doubt, and the easier the conquest over the obstacles in the way of faith. Yet where the faculty of faith is extinct, the evidences of faith are impotent. The life and teachings of Christ are replete with awful witness to this tremendous verity. In His native town "He

could scarce do any mighty works because of their unbelief."[1] Neither His words nor His works convinced the main body of the Pharisees and Sadducees.[2] When He raised Lazarus from the dead, the effect of the miracle upon the Sanhedrin was, not to persuade them of His Messiahship, but to make more quick, and firm, their resolve to put Him to death.[3] Notwithstanding all their intimacy with the Lord Jesus, and the ineffable wonders which that intimacy must have revealed; even His disciples did not believe on Him with an unwavering faith, till after His Resurrection. Their faith was less a result of the evidences displayed to their sense and reason, than of the quickening of their spiritual faculties by the promised descent of the Spirit of God.

It is so still. Faith is the vision of the spirit of man illuminated by the Spirit of God. No otherwise than spiritually, can spiritual things be discerned. In regard to our Blessed Saviour, *e.g.*, the evidences of history prove to me beyond doubt the certainty of His life and death, the beauty of His character, the heroism of His sufferings. But if I approach His life with the *à priori* conviction that miracles do not happen: that the supernatural is essentially incredible: that all stories of Incarnations (of which nearly every religion contains some trace) are legendary fables, and intellectually absurd:—then, according to the kindliness or causticity of my disposition, I shall deal bitterly or tenderly with the ultra-natural incidents of the Gospel narrative. But, in any case, I shall reject them. Unless my spirit is first alive to the reality of things eternal and divine:

[1] Matt. xiii. 58. [2] John x. 25. [3] John xi. 47, *et seq.*

unless I am inwardly conscious, through the operation of God's Spirit on my spirit, of the sinfulness of my nature, on the one hand, and its divine similitude on the other; as well as of the necessity of an Eternal Saviour to redeem me from the taint and practice of sin—I shall not be likely to believe, with the vivid apprehension of a living faith, either in the miracles, or the Incarnation, of the Son of God. A miracle regarded as a material wonder may strike the senses with a feeling of curiosity, or even of awe. A miracle regarded as a supernatural occurrence may strike the intellect with a feeling either of perplexity, or absurdity. But it is only when a miracle is apprehended spiritually, as a sign of the Divine Presence and a Work of the Almighty, that it ceases to be either a wonder, or an absurdity; and falls into its own place as a natural, or at least a not improbable, phenomenon.

There is, perhaps, nothing so strange to the general reader in connexion with the miracles of Christ as the manner of their narration in the Gospel History. There is no occurrence of such expressions as "*mirabile dictu*," "wonderful to relate," (expressions frequently occurring in other narratives of prodigies) in the narrative of the Gospels. The story of the miracles, even of the Resurrection which is the miracle of all miracles, is told with the same calmness, and equanimity, and absence of irregular fervour, as every other part of the history. The most extraordinary events are told in the most ordinary manner: incidents entirely supernatural are recounted in language entirely natural. Strange, indeed, as are the events related: the manner of their relation is even

more strange:—miracles related without marvel, prodigies without wonder, things altogether divine with a simplicity almost superhuman.

This general absence of excited wonder in the story of the Gospel miracles is very wonderful: especially if we remember that, both by race and want of philosophic education, the evangelists would be prone to marvel at anything in the nature of a prodigy. What, then, is the explanation of their childlike calmness, and utter lack of exaggeration? The interpretation is faith. Before His contemporaries had faith, they wondered, and were amazed at the Christ: yet no spiritual conviction followed their amazement, but rather wrath. "They rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong."[1] But when His contemporaries received faith—*i.e.* the vision of His eternal divinity—when their spirits had been quickened into illuminated life, and they realized that God was indeed dwelling among them: then, there ceased to be any marvel in His miracles, His most stupendous works were but the simple signs of His divinity. That an ordinary man should heal the sick, and cleanse the lepers, and raise the dead—yea! raise Himself from the grave—would certainly have been irrational, and unnatural. But that the Incarnate God should do such things was the most natural, and reasonable, thing in the world. It was their faith, therefore, which enabled them to relate, in the most simple manner, the narrative of the most stupendous occurrences in the life of their Lord.

[1] Luke iv. 28, 29.

And without faith it is still impossible to accept, in their divine essence, either the history, or the precepts, of the Gospel narrative. The key-stone of the Gospel narrative is the Incarnation of the Son of God. If this foundation-mystery of the Incarnation be not received: the superstructure of the Gospel story is, to say the least, prodigious, improbable, perplexing. Regarded scientifically—*i.e.* merely from their material side as altogether physical phenomena, and apart from the Incarnation—some of the miracles of Christ are (be it reverently said) more than improbable: they are irrational. For it is irrational to suppose that any mere man could, even for a moment, arrest the operation of universal laws. Nor can I see, for my part, how any one, depending on sense and reason alone, without the aid of faith, can, honestly or with vital energy, accept either the fact of Christ's Resurrection, or the New Testament teachings concerning His redemptive work. The Resurrection is avowedly supernatural, and Redemption is fundamentally spiritual: but no amount of sensible evidence can establish a spiritual truth, or of natural evidence a supernatural fact; any more than the hand can touch an idea, or the tongue can taste a thought. If, therefore, a man has not faith to lay hold of the Incarnation: then, until faith is quickened in him, there is nothing left for him honestly to do with the work of Redemption, and the fact of the Resurrection, except to deny them, or explain them away.

Similarly with other teachings, and precepts, of the Gospel. The reasonableness of many of them is not the reasonableness of the intellect, but the reasonableness of faith. Limit the life of man to the term

of his existence on earth, and not a few of the Gospel precepts—notably those enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount concerning the blessedness of them that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, and the profitableness of plucking out an offending eye or cutting off an offending hand, and the praying for them that despitefully use us, and the need for striving to enter on the narrow way the gate of which is strait[1]—are foolish and unreasonable. Their reasonableness and wisdom depend on the certainty of a life after death : a life in which all self-sacrifice, and noble suffering, and self-controlling restraint, will receive their due recompense of reward. But the existence of such a life is altogether imperceptible by sense: and, although not improbable to reason, is yet absolutely certain to faith alone. It is by the same faculty of faith, therefore, by which we apprehend the mysteries of the Incarnation and Resurrection, that we also perceive the divine reasonableness even of the hardest, and most unworldly, precepts of the Gospel. What things seemed, and could not but seem, madness to the philosophy of the most noble Festus—viz. Paul's teachings concerning the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, the need for repentance, and the Christian joy in affliction—these things to the faith of Paul were simple truth and soberness.[2] Because there shone in the breast of Paul a light brighter than sense, and stronger than reason ; therefore Paul saw things which to Festus were invisible, and rejoiced in sufferings with a joy which to Festus was like madness.

Such, then, seems to be the nature of living,

[1] Matt. v., vi., vii., *passim*. [2] Acts xxvi. 24, 25.

personal, faith. It is the faculty of the spirit: a faculty in no wise contrary to, yet altogether transcending, the faculties of soul, and body. Faith does not make void either reason or sense. Sense and reason, like faith, are gifts of God. Faith often, and especially in its seasons of trial and darkness, stands greatly in need of the help and witness, of both reason and sense. The witness of the senses to the beauties and harmonies of Nature, and the witness of the rational and moral faculties of the soul to the wisdom and righteousness of the general constitution of things, often prepare the way of faith; and quicken into conscious activity a faith which has been latent and dormant. Reason also is a great help to faith, by its power of apprehending the enormous difficulties and improbabilities besetting religious doubt. Still, although in close alliance with reason and sense, and largely depending on them for nourishment and illumination; yet living faith is a distinct, separate faculty in man—the faculty by which alone he can apprehend the spiritual verities of religion, and be brought into personal fellowship with the Personal God. God is a Spirit, and true communion with God is only possible to man through the agency of the spirit which is in man.

No attempt has been made in this chapter to treat of questions of casuistry: of doubts pertaining to matters of conscience and of conduct. Nor has any mention been made of that rare kind of faith—for of its kind it is faith—which moved Columbus, *e.g.*, upon very slight evidence, and against the whole weight of the opinion of the age, to set forth on his adventurous voyage. Faith of this kind—faith resting on

evidence very slender, yet very sure—has wrought wonders even in the secular history of mankind. It has made conquerors, inventors, discoverers, statesmen. Whoever is possessed of it, is, in proportion to the extent of the possession, in advance of his fellow-men in clearness of vision, and energy of conviction, and power of accomplishment. It is also noteworthy that far-seeing persons—persons with an uncommon length of range in secular vision—are often persons of spiritual sagacity, and religious foresight. And it may well be that there is a very intimate relation between intellectual sagacity and spiritual intelligence, between the faith of the soul and the faith of the spirit. This question, however, is not touched in this chapter.

The simple object of this chapter is to show (1) the difference between faith as a faculty and faith as a creed: (2) the right relation of body to soul, and of soul to spirit; as well as the true character of the authority which reason should exercise over sense, and faith over reason: (3) the impossibility of discerning spiritual things—such as the existence of God, the mystery of the Incarnation, the redemption of Mankind, and the rewards of the life after death—otherwise than spiritually. It will be one of the objects of the chapters which follow this, to shew that although religion cannot exist apart from faith; yet that sense and reason alike, each in its own department of testimony and sphere of operation, are favourable to faith and adverse to doubt.

CHAPTER III.

OF MAN'S CAPACITY FOR RELIGIOUS DOUBT.

"The point of the matter is this. If we had no part of our own to perform in accepting belief, if it were no more a matter of our own choice and feeling whether or not we admitted revealed truths, than whether we admitted some indisputable fact in history or some proposition in science: then this belief would not be religion for us at all, it would be a branch of science and nothing more. It would have no more moral significance than a proposition in Euclid."—*Pastor Pastorum*, p. 61.

THE capacity of good men for religious doubting is a startling phenomenon: and a phenomenon demanding the most patient attention. Naturally we should expect all good men to be religious: and all religious men to be good. But as it is notorious that all men professedly religious are not good: so all men morally good are notoriously not religious. Why is this? The whole reason of the thing may not, perhaps, be either clear, or knowable, by us on earth—as, indeed, of what perplexing thing is the whole reason yet knowable, or manifest? But some parts, at least, of the full reason are knowable even now: parts such as these following.

(1) First, with reference to the fact that all religious persons are not moral, it should be observed that if any person be continuously, and consistently, immoral; then either his religion has been falsely assumed, as a cloke for his immoralities; and is, therefore, not

religion, but merely a false semblance of it. Or else, the person being actually religious—*i.e.* having the eyes of his spirit actually open, as were the eyes of Balaam,[1] to the reality of the existence of God, and of the Unseen Universe—he yet sins with eyes open against his religion: setting deliberately at defiance the admonitions of his religion, and the warnings of his spirit. At what point this deliberate defiance of his religion by a person spiritually alive and spiritually conscious—whose inward eyes are really open all the time he is endeavouring to shut them—becomes the sin against the Holy Ghost which shall not be forgiven, neither in this world-age, nor in the age to come;[2] it would be presumptuous to attempt to determine. This at least is certain, that all religious persons who are not also constantly striving to be moral—*i.e.* to illustrate in the truth, and beauty, of daily life the power and the loveliness of the visions of faith—who, having in them the light of God, yet, instead of letting that light shine before men through the medium of morality (the lantern of good works), obscure and profane that light by the base darkness of their immoralities: all such persons are, according to the Scriptures, in a position of quite indescribable peril. For it is written, "If we sin wilfully"—*i.e.* deliberately, persistently, impenitently—"after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins: but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and indignation of fire."[3]

But that Christian people, whose spirits have once been illuminated to see the Invisible Christ, and

[1] Numb. xxiv. 3. [2] Matt. xii. 32. [3] Heb. x. 26, 27.

quickened to feel the presence of the Holy Ghost, may yet tread under foot the Son of God by their infidelities, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace by their immoralities, is one of the most fearful of all the truths revealed in Holy Scripture.[1] Yet it is a truth in harmony with our frequent experience: and a truth, moreover, in harmony with what appears to be the universal method, or law, of God's dealing with men in every department of their manifold life. God bestows gifts, and light, and opportunities, on men: but never compels them to use their gifts, or follow their light, or lay hold on their opportunities.

This law of liberty either to despise our faculties and privileges; or to honour, and make good use of, them, may be called "*The Law of Divine Permission.*" It is a Law which, like so many other laws and facts of the Universe, is largely inscrutable by man. But, notwithstanding its inscrutability, it is a most manifest law. It is, moreover, a law which is not limited in its operations to any single department of man's complex being. It is in operation throughout the whole nature of man. Every day we see it at work in sensible things. Our senses tell us, *e.g.*, that fire burns: yet children play with fire. Men see the gurglings, and hear the roarings, of Niagara: yet they attempt to shoot its falls. By the monitions of sensible pain men are warned against the ultimate consequences of bodily indulgences: yet experience daily proves that they wilfully set at nought these monitions.

In a greater degree still we see this law of the divine, yet self-avenging, permission to neglect our

[1] Heb. x. 29.

gifts and our light, operating in the department of reason. It is scarcely too much to say that by far the largest part of the miseries, and disappointments, and woes, of men are due to the violations of reason, and the defiance of the understanding. Men know quite well that indolence, and sensuality, and rashness, lead on to misery: they know quite well that unless an opportunity for the improvement of their condition is taken hold of at once, it will soon pass away and probably never return: yet, in spite of these clear voices of both reason and experience, they wilfully neglect their opportunities, and give no heed to their understanding.

Seeing, then, that according to the Law of Divine Permission, men with the eyes of sense wide open are suffered to do senseless things; and with the eyes of reason wide open to do irrational things, it is no new law which leaves them free, with the eyes of their spirit wide open, to do unspiritual things. The religious faculty of the spirit no more compels men to act religiously, than the rational faculty of the soul compels them to act rationally. Men with reason may resist its voice, and quench its light. Similarly men may quench the light and resist the voice of faith. Notwithstanding their ability to discern the spiritual things of religion; they yet may wilfully lead irreligious lives.

The existence of morality depends on the existence of probation; on the surrender of the will, without compulsion, to reason and light. Immoral lives are the rebellions against reason: and irreligious lives are the rebellion against faith. And though we may not be able to understand the whole of the causes

why religious persons are permitted to lead irreligious lives; yet we may see, and see clearly, that it is part of the same economy of things which permits rational persons to lead immoral, *i.e.* irrational, lives. And as no one doubts the existence of reason, because numbers of persons, possessed with the light of reason, yet live irrationally: so neither should any one doubt the existence of faith, because numbers of persons, though partaking of religious light, yet live irreligiously. A wise man neither doubts the existence of reason because rebels against reason live irrationally, nor the existence of faith because rebels against faith live irreligiously: inasmuch as his experience teaches him that the condition of mankind on earth is, under the Law of Divine Permission, universally such, as to permit them to abuse, and to suffer from abusing, whatever gifts or lights, of any sort, they may possess.

With regard to religious persons who sin against their religion, not deliberately and persistently, but occasionally and as it were by impulse; and whose infidelities to their religion are followed by the pangs of contrition, and the miseries of self-torture:—the case is entirely different.

There is all the difference in the world between a temporary, and occasional, overthrow of some higher faculty in man by a faculty that is lower: and the continuous, and willing, subservience of the higher faculties to the rebellious excesses of the lower. When in any one's life reason, for the most part, exercises its sovereignty over sense, while still allowing to the senses their rightful use; then, notwithstanding an occasional overthrow of reason,

such a life is justly called rational. In like manner, when faith exercises a general sovereignty over both sense and reason (though allowing to both in their own sphere due liberty and power); then, notwithstanding an occasional overthrow of faith, the believer is justly said to lead a religious life. For the true character of every life is determined not by any occasional feature of it, but by its dominant tendency and general tone. There is as much difference between sinfulness and sin, as there is between consistent foolishness and an occasional folly. An occasional folly is a momentary overthrow of reason, soon to be avenged by the return of reason to its throne, with perhaps augmented influence: consistent foolishness is the abiding subservience of reason to some rebellious usurper. Similarly, sinfulness is the habitual acquiescence of the spirit, without struggle or regret, in the usurpations of the lower appetites: whereas a single sin is the momentary overthrow of faith by some conflicting element in our nature, soon to be followed by the pangs of spiritual torture, and the determined endeavour of the spirit to resume again, with increased authority, its rightful throne.

Thus neither occasional sins, nor continuous sinfulness, on the part of religious persons are any more argument against religion, than occasional follies, or continuous foolishness, on the part of rational persons are an argument against reason. We know from experience that many persons, endowed with reason, are either occasionally or persistently foolish. We know also from experience that many persons, illuminated with religion, are either occasionally or consistently irreligious. And as men suffer for their neglect of

reason; so (says the Bible) they will suffer, and not escape, for their neglect of religion.[1] But as neither the neglect of reason, nor its consequent sufferings, lead us to doubt or abandon reason: so neither the neglect of religion, nor its appointed miseries, should lead us to doubt or abandon religion.

(2) The same method of reasoning applies to, and partly explains, the phenomenon that religious doubters are not infrequently good men. There are at least three kinds, or stages, of goodness on the earth. There is, first, selfish goodness: goodness whose prime consideration, and motive, is self. Goodness of this sort leads men to restrain their bodily propensions, because they know that excessive indulgence entails suffering, and misery, and loss. For the sake of their own health and comfort, therefore, such men are sober, temperate, chaste, and physically good. Similarly, in all their relationships of life, they are strictly moral; because morality pays better than immorality. They are kind because kindness brings kindness in return. They are prompt, punctual, courteous, honest, industrious, truthful; because, in the long run, all these virtues yield a high rate of civic, social, and commercial profit. Goodness of this selfish kind has much baseness in it: yet it is goodness of a sort; and regarded from the point of view of the common weal, it is decidedly better than immorality. For it is obviously more to the advantage of every community that its members should be healthy, and honest; than dishonest, and sickly.

The second grade of goodness is much superior to

[1] Heb. ii. 3.

this. It minds not self alone, but others also: and at times, others even more than self. In the elevation and advancement of others, this kind of goodness seeks its chief reward. To this species of goodness belong all manner of self-sacrificing affections: the affections of exalted patriotism, of noble-hearted and much enduring citizenship, of modest consecration to the happiness of home, of an uncomplaining martyrdom to any noble cause. Goodness such as this is a blessing and glory to the world. Yet it is sometimes a goodness of the earth, earthy. Its aims, and motives, reach not always unto heaven. It often takes no account of God, or of the future life. Yet it is very beautiful. It fosters imagination, it encourages heroism, it witnesses to the power of the Ideal. In all ages, among all races and religions of the earth, in the hearts of men without any religion at all (or at least professing, and thinking, themselves to have none) the flowers of this goodness have sweetly blossomed into clusters of life-giving fruit. A grand and glorious fact, such as the fact of this splendid goodness existing apart from the special influence of religion, is well calculated to enlarge our conceptions of God's habitation with men, of the potential nobility of human nature, and of the essential, though unconfessed, divinity of every manner of goodness.

But there is a third grade of goodness which is confessedly divine. This is the goodness of the truly religious man. On its earthly face, this goodness has many features in common with the noblest moral goodness. It is humble and heroic: ever thoughtful of the welfare of others, and willing to make all necessary sacrifices to promote that welfare. But it

is a goodness whose fountains are in heaven, though its streams water and bless the earth: a goodness whose first devotion is to God, though its devotion to God is perpetually manifested in its service to man.

This religious goodness is the most complete, and perfect, goodness of which man is capable on earth: for it is the pure, and lofty, exercise of the noblest powers of all the parts of man's threefold nature. All other forms of goodness are incomplete, and imperfect; because they do not call into exercise every part, and faculty, of man. Selfish goodness is sometimes merely sensible goodness: a goodness caused by that shrinking from pain which is an admonitive precept of sense. At other times, selfish goodness is rational as well as sensible: it springs from obedience to the dictates both of understanding, and sense. But selfish goodness is not the goodness wrought by the combination of all the best faculties of the soul. It leaves out of play the faculties of noble will, and lofty imagination, and self-sacrificing affection, and generous impulse, and righteous wrath, and beautiful heroism. Yet, even when goodness is the product of all the loftiest faculties both of body and soul, it still is not the complete goodness of a perfect man. For a perfect man has a spirit, as well as a body and a soul. And by faith, which is the faculty of the spirit, man perceives God, and his duty to God: just as by reason, which is a faculty of the soul, he contemplates humanity, and his duty to men. Therefore, just as any goodness which merely contemplates self, and leaves mankind out of view, is an incomplete goodness; because it fails to exercise the

faculty of reason, by which we perceive the brotherhood of men, and the duty of service to that brotherhood: so also any goodness which merely contemplates mankind and leaves God out of view, is an incomplete goodness; because it fails to exercise the faculty of faith, by which man perceives the Sovereignty of God, and the duties owing to that Sovereignty.

Complete and perfect goodness is thus the goodness of the complete and perfect man. It is goodness of body, goodness of soul, goodness of spirit. It is the goodness arising out of obedience to ennobled sense, and exalted reason, and holy faith. In its ideal, as a fact, it is the goodness of Christ; Who was wholly without sin, wholly devoted to the service of mankind, and constantly in communion with His Father. In its ideal, as an aim, it is the goodness of every Christian; who desires in body, soul, and spirit, to be conformed to the perfect image of his Master Christ.

Thus the goodness of non-religious persons is, if measured by the Christian standard, a goodness essentially incomplete. It may be, and often is, a goodness beautiful and great: but yet it is not the goodness of the whole man. It is an imperfect goodness; because although a goodness of the soul, it is not a goodness of the spirit. It is the greatest goodness conceivable by reason: but not the full goodness which is wrought by faith. It is a goodness which abundantly discharges its duties to men: yet leaves undischarged its duties towards God. It is a goodness which wins, and rightly wins, great praise from men; praise often higher than the praise accorded to the goodness of religious persons; especially when, as is sometimes the case, this goodness of non-religious

persons exceeds that of the majority of persons professedly religious. None the less, when we consider the divinity, and the heavenliness, of man's spiritual nature—his celestial origin, and his similitude to God—we are compelled to the conclusion that any goodness, however grand and excellent, which omits all acknowledgment and duty towards God is a goodness fundamentally defective; and a goodness, considering the partial divinity of man's nature, entirely unworthy of man.

(3) But with respect to this incompleteness, and imperfection, of even the highest goodness of non-religious men; the question arises, How is it that good men are not always religious? Why is moral goodness, which is often confessedly beautiful and sublime, ever allowed to be unspiritual; and, therefore, fundamentally insufficient and defective? If good men could see God as they see their fellow-creatures; if they could as consciously realize the fact of the Divine Fatherhood, as they consciously realize the fact of the human brotherhood: they would be as eager, and devoted, in their duty towards God as now they are in their duty towards their fellows. But to some good men the vision of God, if not wholly dark, is dim, and uncertain, and indistinct. They are in doubt even as to the existence of God. They do not assuredly know that He is. They have no realized consciousness of the Eternal, and the Invisible. They hear religious persons talk of spiritual things: but they attach no meaning whatever to the term "spiritual."[1] Faith

[1] A friend of mine, once talking to a noted scientific man, used the word "spiritual" in the course of conversation. "I suppose," said the man of science to my friend, "you attach some meaning to the word: but for me the word has no meaning whatever."

is to them a kind of enthusiastic sentiment: a flight of the imagination into realms of traditional fancy: an illusion, beautiful and grand, yet still an illusion without any basis of fact. If they do not think religion, foolishness: they are unable to comprehend that it is anything more than fervour.

Such a phenomenon as this we must acknowledge to be strange; and, because of its great seriousness, most worthy of attention. In the world of mankind we find, on the one hand, that very large numbers of all sorts and conditions of persons, in every grade of civilization from the lowest to the highest, in every degree of development from the most barbarous ignorance to the most splendid culture, have a religion of some kind: a religion which is a reality to them, and brings them into constant communication with the invisible universe. On the other hand, among all the religious communities of the world, and not least of all among Christians, we find a large body of men—including in their ranks some of the best, the most intelligent, the most noble and honourable of mankind—who have grave doubts about the reality of religion altogether: to whom the existence of a Personal God, and an endless personality for man, are questions without an answer, problems incapable of solution, valleys of unillumined shadow, visions as of an impenetrable darkness.

It is strange, indeed, that this should be so: that intelligent, and noble, men should find themselves shut up for life in dungeons of sightless doubt, and agnostic darkness: while others, whose intelligence and nobility is often of a far lower grade, should be endowed with a firm, and unquestioning, faith; and

should have unclouded spiritual visions of things materially invisible. In the next chapter we shall seek to enter more fully into the Causes of this religious darkness and doubt. Our enquiry, at present, is not so much into the Causes, as into the Capacity, for Religious Doubt. Concerning the causes of doubt there may be differences of opinion; but concerning man's capacity for doubt there can be no such differences. Man's capacity for doubt is an unquestionable fact, a fact at least as certain as his capacity for faith. For as the fact that multitudes of honest men believe, is a proof of man's capacity for faith; so the fact that multitudes of men, equally honest, do not believe, is a proof of man's capacity for doubt.

The fact of honest faith, and the fact of honest doubt, are both alike unquestionable facts: and truth-loving men should boldly recognize both facts without cynicism, and without reserve. Hitherto there has been much passion displayed on both sides. Believers have condemned doubters, as if doubt were wilful and unpardonable sin.[1] Doubters have ridiculed believers, as if faith were a baseless and infantile imagination. The passions of both believers and doubters have made them alike blind to the plain, and incontrovertible, fact that, on the one hand, great and good men believe; and, on the other hand, great and good men doubt. Unmistakeable facts such as these deserve a more just, and more scientific, treatment than mere insolent condemnation; or mere insolent ridicule. We may not perhaps, as yet, be

[1] As recently as the beginning of the eighteenth century the Associate Presbytery announced in their "testimony" that religious toleration was amongst the foremost causes of God's wrath against sinful and backsliding Scotland (Lecky, ii. 80).

able to understand the complete causes either of man's capacity for faith or man's capacity for doubt: but both capacities are tremendous facts, and imperatively demand the most serious attention of truth-loving men.

It is, indeed, no explanation of the fact of religious doubt that "faith is the gift of God:" [1] and that "He giveth it to whom He will." [2] Both these statements are unquestionably true: yet neither of them furnishes any clue to the discovery of the reason why all men, at least all good men, have not faith.[3] For although faith be the gift of God, yet from the Christian point of view, faith in no wise differs, in this respect, from every other faculty of which man is possessed. The Christian acknowledges that not faith alone, but all good things whatsoever, are the gift of God: and that he has nothing which he has not received.[4] Faith does not stand upon any special foot of its own, in respect to its dependence on the bounty of God. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." [5] Reason is the gift of God: so also is every pure affection, and every lofty impulse of the soul. Our senses are the gift of God: and the restoration to health of some of the senses was among the most frequent miracles wrought by Christ. Therefore the fact that faith is the gift of God is no more, and no better, an explanation of why all men have not faith; than the fact that sight and reason are God's gifts, is an explanation why some men are void of both reason and sight.

[1] Eph. ii. 8. [2] Dan. iv. 17. [3] 2 Thess. iii. 2.
[4] 1 Cor. iv. 7. [5] Jas. i. 17.

And if it be assumed, as predestinarians and fatalists assume, that God bestows these gifts arbitrarily; then at least it must be acknowledged, on the divine principle that the Judge of all the earth will do right,[1] that those who have not received the gift of faith will not be held responsible for being void of faith. Upon every principle of righteous judgment men's responsibility is measured, as the Scripture saith, according to what they have, and not according to what they have not.[2] If men have once received the gift of faith and have destroyed it wilfully, or have let it die through neglect and want of cultivation; then they are responsible for their unfaith, just as they would be responsible for their unreason, if by carnal indulgence or neglect, they had diminished or extinguished the light of reason. There is unquestionably an awful kind of doubt which is the consequence of sin, just as there is an awful kind of insanity which is the result of intemperance and filthiness: but there is assuredly both much insanity, and much doubt, which is not of this guilty kind. To pour condemnation on this insanity of the pure, and these doubts of the good, is the cruelty of hell, not the charity of heaven.

In like manner, the ridicule of faith by doubters is no less unscientific, and wrong, than the condemnation of doubt by believers. That man has the capacity for faith is proved by the fact that multitudes of honest, truthful, sober-minded men declare themselves not only conscious, but in the healthy exercise, of this capacity: a capacity which enables them, while not neglecting either the teachings of

[1] Gen. xviii. 25. [2] 2 Cor. viii. 12.

reason or sense, to discern things undiscernible by reason, and imperceptible to sense. Nor is it any flaw in this fact of faith ; or in its claim to be distinct from, and even superior to, reason ; that it is sometimes, yea, even frequently, to be found in individuals, and among classes, whose knowledge and intellectual power are very limited. Intellectual power, and considerable knowledge, are both necessary to the understanding of the evidences of faith : but to faith itself, they are not necessary. For just as a man may see clearly, although he is wholly ignorant of optics, or the science of vision : so a man may believe firmly, without being learned in theology, or the science of faith. The organ with which men see is the eye : the organ with which they believe is the spirit—but the organ with which they understand either optics, or theology, is the rational soul. And just as men may have their reason strong, and their eyesight weak : so they may have their reason weak, and their faith strong. And as it is no just cause for ridicule against a man's reason that his eyesight is feeble ; neither is it any just cause for ridicule against his faith that his understanding is limited. The faculty of faith is as distinct from the understanding, as the faculty of understanding is distinct from sight. Blind men can rightly think, and men intellectually dull can rightly believe : because the faculties with which men see, and think, and believe, are (as we have previously shewn) to a great extent, distinct and separate faculties.[1]

At the same time it is by no means always the most unlearned among men who are the best, and

[1] Cf. pp. 33–44.

surest, believers. As among thinkers, those are often the clearest and strongest and most accurate, whose senses most assist the reason in the pursuit of material observations and scientific experiments: so among believers, those are generally the greatest and most firm; whose reason most strongly, and most clearly, sustains their faith in bearing evidence to things unseen. A man with feeble eyesight may be a powerful thinker, yet he is a defective man: and a man with a poor understanding may be rich in faith, yet he is still a defective man. Strength and wealth of sense and reason and faith, all alike, are essential to the completeness of a well-endowed man. Thus although a man may have faith without fully understanding the rational grounds for faith: yet as man, in his completeness, is a rational being, therefore an irrational faith is the faith of a man incompletely, and imperfectly, endowed. Reason, as a rule, is sensible, *i.e.* in agreement with the evidences of sense; and faith, as a rule, is rational, *i.e.* in agreement with the testimony of reason.[1] Faith without understanding is apt, as all experience shews, to degenerate into superstition. It is through the culture of the understanding that wholesomeness of temper, and rightness of proportion, are generally imparted to faith.

Seeing then that far from any antagonism existing of necessity between reason and faith, there is great mutual advantage in their alliance—faith chastening and enlarging reason, and reason confirming and liberalizing faith—it is not surprising to frequently find in the very highest order of men; whether poets, statesmen, philosophers, lawgivers, scientists, inventors,

[1] For some exceptions, cf. p. 48.

philanthropists, etc.—a natural and exalting harmony between reason and faith. What is surprising is, not the frequent harmony, but the frequent discord, between these two great faculties of man; reason ridiculing faith, and faith repudiating reason. Lamentable and injurious, however, as this discord is, it possesses one advantage:—the advantage of adding a strong link to that chain of evidence which testifies to the separateness of the faculties of reason, and faith. For no absolute identity can possibly be at war with itself. If the soul were identical with the spirit, and reason were identical with faith; then they could not possibly be in antagonism against each other. Faith could not contemn reason, nor reason make mockery of faith. Out of their concussion, however deplorable, flashes the light of the great truth that the faculties of reason and faith in man are separable faculties, just as are the faculties of reason and sense: and that man is composed not of two parts only, body and soul; but of three parts, body and soul and spirit. In respect to the complexity of his nature, as well as in other respects, triune man is made in the image, and after the likeness, of the Triune God.[1]

It is in this separateness of the faculties of reason and faith, that we find a partial solution of the great mystery of man's capacity for doubt: or, at least, if not a solution of the mystery (which indeed it cannot wholly be), yet a clear indication that the capacity for doubt is not different from, but similar to, the capacity for other human imperfections. The most superficial observer cannot but perceive that the world in which we live is essentially an imperfect world. The proofs

[1] Gen. i. 26, 27.

of imperfection everywhere abound. No climate is perfect: no landscape, no season, no crop, no flower, no tree, no fruit, no bird, nor fish, nor living thing. Under the sun there is nothing perfect. All things are imperfect. Whether out of each lower imperfection some higher perfection may not be ultimately evolved is not our present problem. That there are many signs of the promise of such an evolution, is evident from the fact that, out of such imperfections as those of climate and season and crop, the higher perfections of industry, and self-denial, and courage, are frequently produced. But without enquiring either into the origin, or the ultimate purpose, of the imperfections of the world; the plain fact of these imperfections is everywhere manifest.

And man is no exception to this universal law of imperfectness. No man on earth is perfect, and without defect. The defect sometimes appears in the body, and is a defect of sense: of sight, or hearing, or taste, or speech. Sometimes the defect is in the soul, and produces imperfection of understanding, or emotion, or affection, or will. And sometimes the defect is in the spirit, and produces imperfection of faith: which is practically equivalent to the capacity for doubt. The imperfection of faith is thus analogous to the imperfection of reason, and the imperfection of sight. And the capacity for doubt is analogous to the capacity for blindness, and the capacity for insanity, or absence of reason. As men may be born blind of body, so may they be born blind of soul, or blind of spirit: as they may be, and sometimes are, without sight or without reason, so likewise may they be, and sometimes are, without faith. Men may be senseless,

or irrational, or unspiritual, according as the part of their nature which is incomplete is the bodily or the rational or the spiritual part.

To be without faith, however, is not the same thing as to be wholly without spirit; any more than to be without reason, is the same as to be wholly without soul: or to be without sight the same as to be entirely without body. Sight is only one function of the body, and reason one function of the soul, and faith one function of the spirit. The body has other organs besides the eye: the soul, other organs besides reason: the spirit, other organs besides faith. The body can feel, without eyes: the soul can feel, though bereft of reason: and the spirit can feel, without actually seeing Him Who is invisible. A man may be altogether without spiritual vision—he may be in total blindness of spirit, and dwell in thick darkness; and yet feel, and feel intensely, a great horror of the Eternal—thus proving that, although his spiritual sight is gone, his spiritual feeling still remains.

Moreover, the possession of a faculty, and the consciousness of that possession, are wholly distinct, and separate, things. In a sleep, or a swoon, I am not conscious of the possession of my physical faculties: yet the faculties are there, as is proved by my becoming conscious of them when I awake from sleep, or recover from the swoon. In like manner, on becoming insane, a man often loses both the power, and consciousness, of reason: and this for many years together. Yet the faculty of reason may still be there: as is proved by the number of persons who, after many years' loss of it, recover both its consciousness, and its use. Similarly with the faculty of faith.

A man may, many men do, lose both the consciousness and the power of spiritual vision. Yet the faculty is not necessarily dead: as is proved by the fact that numbers of persons, after many years' loss of it, recover both its vividness and its power.

And what is an observation of great moment and seriousness is that, the recovery of spiritual vision is, of all other times, the most frequent in old age, and especially at the very near approach of death. It was in the very moment of dying that Schiller whispered: "Many things are becoming clearer to me: many things are clearer." The eyes of his spirit opened, as the eyes of his body closed. And if in death; then perhaps, after death, with greater consciousness and perspicuity still, those spiritual faculties which have been dark, and which we thought dead, may be quickened into life and consciousness very vivid, if not also terrible.

In treating, however, of such high topics; although speculations—particularly speculations strongly sustained by the probabilities of the case—are not to be wholly omitted, else the power to make them would seem to be a wholly wanton and useless power (which is a perilous supposition in reference to any faculty so grand as speculation): yet I say, in treating such high topics, the method of the greatest safety and the surest wisdom, is the humble method of observation from the known facts of the case, rather than the vaulting method of speculations concerning the unknown.

And the fact of the case is that, as no man has ever lived who, though wanting in sight, has been possessed of no sensible faculties whatever; and no

man has ever lived who, though wanting in reason, has been void of every kind of soul-faculty: so no man has ever been known to live who, from his earliest to his latest years, has never felt some consciousness of the Infinite, and the Eternal, and the Invisible: thus shewing that though the eye of faith may be blind, yet some other spirit-faculty (such as the faculty of dread, or awe, or reverence) has once been alive in the man: and, as we have just observed, may, despite the man's present state of spiritual unconsciousness, be only dormant, and not dead.

At any rate, for the purposes of this book, it is unnecessary to discuss the matter further. For this book is intended to help, if possible, those who doubt; not those who profess wholly to disbelieve. And doubt, of its very nature, implies at least partial faith. To be wholly without faith would be to be also wholly without doubt. He who does not believe at all (if such a man there be) does not doubt at all. His very doubting is an evidence of his partial believing: just as a man's misgiving lest he is not reasoning rightly is an evidence that he has not wholly lost his reason, and his misgiving that he does not see straight is an evidence that he is not stone blind. Some men, we know, see: but do not see well. Some think, but do not think well. Similarly, some believe: but do not believe well. They have some vision of the invisible: some realization of the infinite: some perception of immortality. But the vision is not clear, and the realization is not firm, and the perception is wavering. They are half-believers: but also half-doubters. Men are to

them (to use the fine Scripture metaphor) as trees walking.[1]

Here again the capacity for doubt, or half-belief, is on a par with the capacity for half-sight, or half-reason. And although it is no solution of any problem to shew its analogy to other problems; yet such analogies testify that the original problem is neither unique, nor singular. It is so with the problem of man's capacity for religious doubt. It is no solution of the problem to shew that the capacity for doubt is analogous to the capacity for blindness, and unreason. But the analogy suffices to shew that the capacity for doubt is not an unique, or singular capacity; but is part of the universal imperfection of the world, and of man. The imperfections of faith are not different from other human imperfections. They are obviously similar, and akin, to the imperfections of reason, and of sense. We cannot, therefore, be far wrong in ascribing the capacity for doubt to the same origin as the capacity for blindness, or unreason. These three imperfections—albeit one is of the body, another of the soul, and another of the spirit—so closely resemble each other in their impotence to discern the things of the material, and the rational, and the spiritual worlds respectively; that we may justly conclude that they all alike form part of the present imperfect dispensation of human affairs: a dispensation, though apparently evil, yet existing, and operating, under (what we have named) "the Law of Divine permission."

In a state of human existence from which all imperfection was eliminated, there would be no blindness,

[1] Mark viii. 24.

no unreason, and similarly no doubt.[1] In man's perfect state of being—a state which Christianity teaches us not to hope for till after the Resurrection and the Final Judgment—all the faculties of the body, and the soul, and the spirit will be perfect. But, at present, as experience irresistibly testifies, all these faculties alike are capable of, and very liable to, imperfection.

It is, moreover, no sound objection to this course of reasoning to say; that faith being so all-important to the eternal salvation of man, it is impossible to suppose that the good God would permit any man to be incapable of faith. Such an assumption, I say, is absolutely baseless. For, to begin with, what just cause have we for supposing, apart from evidence, that God will not do this, or not do that? From the very nature of His infinitude and omniscience, as well as from the teachings of revelation, we know that His thoughts are not the thoughts, and His ways not the ways, of finite and unknowing man.[2] We have absolutely no means of ascertaining anything whatever concerning the methods, and purposes, of God; except from the things which He has been pleased to reveal, and to permit, and to do. And learning in this way, which is the only way possible to us, we learn from the plain facts of human life, that God permits men to be blind, although sight is all-important to the uses, and felicities, of life: and He permits them to be insane, although, without reason, man's life on earth appears to be unworthy even of the name of life. That there are sometimes

[1] Doubt is here, and throughout this course of reasoning, used not in the sense of differences of opinion concerning evidences of religion; but of dimness, or darkness, of vision concerning religion itself.

[2] Isa. lv. 8.

compensations for blindness in the added intensity and loveliness of the inward vision, as was the case with Homer and Milton and Handel, is not to the point ; because, in the analogous instance of insanity, there are no such compensations ; at least none as yet manifest to us. Where reason is absent, all that makes human life on earth worth possessing—the beauties of art, the treasures of knowledge, the joys of love, the raptures of poetry, the wonders of science, the powers of accurate thought, the message of the stars, the realized kinship with humanity—all, all is wanting. And yet men are born into the world wanting reason ; (and believing, as we Christians do believe, that God permits all things to be which are) wanting reason, by the permission of God. The fact, therefore, that faith is so important to man, furnishes no stronger an assurance that all men must be endowed with the faculty of faith, than the importance of reason furnishes proof that all men must be gifted with the reasoning faculty ; which, as a matter of experience, we know they are not.

And if it be further contended that as eternity is unimaginably longer than time, no analogy is possible between the importance of reason and of faith ; then it need only be observed that utter imbeciles have no more faith than reason, and that two-thirds of the inhabitants of the world have hitherto never heard of Christ : without the knowledge of Whom, Christian faith, at all events, is impossible. The truth is that when men argue not from things which are, but from imaginations of things which to them appear ought to be, they argue from an ever-shifting, and therefore never sure, foundation and premiss. It was this

false way of arguing from appearances, instead of from facts, which, for ages upon ages, betrayed mankind into false physical science. It is the same false ratiocination which still enthrals multitudes in the fetters of false religion. Physical science has been made free, and strong, by reasoning from things as they veritably are: and as soon as religious men cease from suppositions and semblances, and learn to reason from things as they are, a similar emancipation and development of power lies in store for religion. At all events it is certain, that the only true knowledge of what will be permitted by God must be learned from the facts of revelation, and of life. And among these facts are the imperfections, and even the absence, in numbers of individuals, of the faculties of sight, and reason, and faith.

The imperfection of faith and the capacity for doubt exists, therefore, in accordance with the "Law of Divine Permission." And it is obvious that when this imperfection is a defect from birth, the responsibility of the imperfection lies not with the imperfect person. It is with congenital doubt, as it is with congenital insanity, or congenital blindness. When men are born blind, their blindness is by no means always due, as Rabbinical superstitions cruelly supposed, either to their own sin, or to the sin of their parents. Our Saviour Christ has taught us that there may be other reasons for blindness: and among these reasons the manifestation of the glory of God.[1] Similarly with the birth-imperfections of

[1] John ix. 3. This question of the disciples of Christ is evidently connected with their Rabbinical education: and is tinged with the superstition of ante-natal sin borrowed by the Rabbis from either Greek or Egyptian doctrines of metempsychosis.

insanity, and of invincible doubt. Who shall lay these things to the charge of the insane, or the doubting, man? How, indeed, the glory of God will ultimately be manifested either through insanity or doubt, any more than through blindness, we cannot yet understand. But that, in the end (far off perhaps, yet in the end) it will be so manifested, and manifested through its benignity on those who suffer from it, no one who believes in God, and in His controlling goodness over the destinies of men, can hesitate to hope: particularly since the teachings of Christ have so plainly authorized the expectation.

> "Yes! yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> *Defects of doubt*, and taints of blood:
>
> "That nothing walks with aimless feet:
> That not one life shall be destroyed,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete."[1]

The case, however, clearly stands on a different foot when religious doubt is neither congenital, nor invincible; but self-imposed, and wilful. A man who should put out his own eyes, or become blind through ophthalmia generated from filthiness, is clearly in a quite different position of responsibility for his blindness; from the man who is blind from his birth. So when insanity is induced by wanton intemperance or lewdness, it is obviously not an innocent insanity; however pitiful, from other points of view, its miseries may be. Similarly with religious doubt. The doubt which is engendered by the lusts of the flesh, or the lusts of the mind, or the pleasures

[1] "In Memoriam," liv.

of the world, is evidently a very different kind of doubt, in regard to the doubter's responsibility for it, from the invincible doubt which is the birth-blindness of the spirit, the innocent incapacity of the faculty of faith.

Moreover, in the worlds of matter, and of mind, we perceive that very injurious consequences follow from habits, which far from being wicked, appear at first sight to be laudable. What, *e.g.*, could appear more laudable than severe application, and indomitable energy, and incessant industry, in the study of letters or the researches of science? Yet what is more common than the fact that, when such researches are conducted with an industry, untempered by due considerations for the health and strength of the body, consequences of the most serious character are likely to follow? Overstrained eyes are prone to blindness, and an overwrought brain is prone to insanity; however laudable be the pursuit in which the eyes are overstrained, and the brain overwrought. In the ordering of human life, we find that the innocence of the pursuit is no guarantee against the penalties of excess. The great, and all-commanding, law of the health and happiness of man, seems to be the law of the co-ordinate and harmonious development of each part of his triune nature—body, soul, and spirit—equally, and severally. If the body be outraged, and taxed beyond its proper powers, even though the over-taxation be in rational pursuits and intellectual efforts, themselves innocent and laudable; the body will suffer, and sickness, with impotencies of various kinds, will ensue. Likewise if the soul be overstrained by excess in even innocent and admirable

pursuits, not only will the body suffer by reaction of the soul; but the soul itself will grow sickly and weak—the will overstrained will turn to imbecility, the reason overstrained will turn to insanity, the affections overstrained into madness, the conscience overstrained into melancholy.

Similarly with the spirit. If the spirit be overstrained; the spirit will suffer. Reverential fear will be turned into quaking terror, faith will degenerate into superstition, worship into idolatry, and reverence into cringing. And the degeneracy of the overstrained spirit will involve sickliness of soul: reason will be enervated, the free action of the will-power will become the slavish inaction of obstinacy, conscience will grow tortuous and affection cold. Overtaxed faith also leads, not uncommonly, to the waverings of doubt; as the history of superstition abundantly testifies.

It is only by the due and co-ordinate development of the faculties of body, soul, and spirit; that the health and harmony of man, in his perfect completeness, can be procured. There is in every man a capacity for sickness, a capacity for insanity, a capacity for doubt. And although, in some instances, the three evils of sickness, and insanity, and doubt, lie beyond the control of human conduct and human will: yet, in the majority of instances, they seem to lie, at least partially, within our control. We may bring any of these evils upon ourselves by indulgences confessedly wicked. Or we may incur them by excesses apparently innocent, yet really negligent; (and if we regard the seriousness of the consequences, and the fact that these consequences are foreknown

to us), culpably negligent, of the laws of physical, and mental, and spiritual health.

On the other hand, man's capacity for sickness and insanity and doubt, may be largely nullified, or diminished, by wisdom and attention and care. Sickness may be often counteracted, and health secured, by bodily care and wise attention to physical laws. So is it with tendencies to insanity, and the follies of unreason. These may be frequently counter-influenced by the right pursuit of knowledge, and the due observance of the conditions necessary to soundness of mind. Nor is it otherwise with man's capacity for doubt. This capacity may, in many instances, be practically nullified by the wise cultivation of faith, and the diligent obedience to spiritual laws. For just as men cannot think, or at least cannot think well, without effort and practice and education—as reason needs careful culture before it can be large, and strong, and true—so is it also with the faculty of faith. The right culture of health is the best antidote against the capacity for sickness. The right culture of reason is, we know, the best remedy for foolishness. And the right culture of faith is, in like manner, the best antidote against the capacity for doubt, and the best remedy against the evils attending this capacity.

In the final chapter of this book, enquiry will be made into the methods of conquering doubt by the culture of faith. The purpose of the present chapter has solely been to treat of the fact of man's capacity for doubt. We have seen that all men have this capacity in some degree; not even excluding men who are morally upright, and pure, and good. Moral

persons are not always religious: nor religious persons always moral. As rational men do irrational things, so religious men do irreligious things. The contemplation of the strange phenomena of the follies of rational men, and the irreligion of moral men, and the immoralities of religious men, has shewn that these phenomena are all accordant with, and perhaps partly explicable by, the much-neglected fact of the triune composition of the nature of man: the separateness, and yet the intimacy, in man's earthly condition, of his body and soul and spirit. If these three parts of man were absolutely one, and not severally three, there could be no conflict among them; as there cannot conceivably be any conflict of an absolute unity within itself. When a house is composed of various portions it can be divided against itself; but a single entity cannot be so divided. But although the personal individuality of each man is single; yet that his faculties of body, and soul, and spirit, are distinguishable is evident from the circumstance that they often conflict, and are rebellious, against each other. When rational men do irrational things it is because their spirit or their senses are in rebellion against, and for the time stronger than, their reason. When religious men do irreligious things it is because either their body, or their soul, is for the time triumphant over their spirit. And when moral men are religious doubters, it is because their spiritual faculty is defective and weak; and cannot hold its own against the domination of reason.

Moreover the faculty of faith sometimes appears to be entirely dead, or dormant, in man; as do the

faculties of reason, and sight. In this respect faith in no wise differs from man's other faculties. It may be strong or weak ; partially defective, or entirely absent.[1] But in a complete, and perfect, man all the faculties alike are perfect, and complete. In the Person of Jesus Christ, and in Him alone, this complete perfection of earthly manhood is illustrated and exemplified. There was no flaw in His body, no flaw in His soul, no flaw in His spirit. His senses, His reason and affections and will, together with His faith, were all alike without blemish : and each was developed in the relation of due harmony with the rest. But in all other men there has been some flaw of faculty : or else some disproportion in the development of some single faculty above the rest. From one or other of these causes arises man's capacity for doubt : and it is a capacity (whatever be its origin) existing by the law of Divine Permission, just as do the capacities for blindness, and insanity. Whatever then be the difficulties besetting the problem of man's capacity for doubt, they are not difficulties differing in kind, though perhaps they differ in degree, from the difficulties besetting his capacity for blindness, and insanity.

[1] Complete imbeciles, *e.g.*, have neither reason, nor faith : occasionally, too, they are also blind.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS DOUBT.

"We cannot be acquainted with, or in any propriety of speech be said to know anything, but what we attend to. If men, therefore, attend only to one side, they really will not, cannot see or know what is to be alleged on the other. Though a man hath the best eyes in the world, he cannot see any way but that which he turns them."—BUTLER'S *Sermon on Self-Deceit*, vol. ii. p. 117.

IN entering on the consideration of the Causes of Religious Doubt, we are met on the very threshold of the subject by the singular fact that doubt of every kind, far from being agreeable to, seems to run directly against, the whole course of nature as revealed by modern science. Science tends to shew that we are encompassed on every side by natural law; and the essence of natural law is certainty, not doubtfulness. Moreover, the advance of knowledge is constantly bringing more, and more, subjects under the dominion of law; and is thus constantly rendering fewer things uncertain, and more things sure. Indeed one of the greatest achievements of man's expanding knowledge has been the diminution in the number of things doubtful, and the increase in the number of things certain. In the childhood of the world every human concept of the world was chaotic. No such idea had been conceived as the idea of the reign of law.

Earthquakes and comets, and eclipses, were sources of terror. They were regarded as sudden apparitions, and ungovernable upheavals of dread and unruly powers: symptoms of the unbridled anger of the gods. It never occurred to the men of the infant world that even those phenomena of nature, which are apparently the most licentious and irregular, come under the dominion of fixed and immutable laws:[1] that, in some instances, their appearance can be calculated centuries beforehand: and that, in all instances, the incapacity of man to antedate their appearance is more probably due to man's limited knowledge of natural laws, than to any deviation, or doubtfulness, in the operation of those laws. But as knowledge grows from more to more, the boundaries of doubtfulness are being perpetually pushed farther and farther back: and the reign of certainty is covering an ever wider, and still wider, realm.

And it is not in material things alone that doubtfulness is being gradually exterminated; and certainty substituted in its place. The reign of law is also slowly manifesting itself in the mental and moral departments of the life of man. It is being discovered that neither the mind nor heart of man is a loose and ungoverned chaos; independent of the control of universal order, and exempt from the dominion of all-pervading law. The laws of sentiment and of thought have not yet, indeed, been ascertained with anything like the same accuracy as the laws of the physical

[1] This is true also of the Sokratic age. "Not only men like Nikias, or Anytus and Meletus, but even Sokrates himself protested against the impudence of Anaxagoras, when he degraded the divine Helios and Selene into a sun and moon of calculable motions and magnitude" (Grote's "Greece," vii. 118).

universe. And, perhaps, owing to the incommensurate factor of each individual will, it may be ultimately found that mental and moral laws—the laws of the soul—are incapable of a codification as exact, and precise, as the laws pervading involuntary nature. Nevertheless it is obvious that the researches of psychologists, and mental philosophers, are constantly, though very slowly, reducing to a greater appearance of order the worlds of thought and emotion ; and even also the world of the human will. It is being gradually unfolded to our knowledge that the soul of man—the organ of his thoughts and sentiments—is not a mere fortuitous entity ; but is subject to laws whose operation seems as constant, and as sure, as are the laws which control the bodily part of man's existence.

In the sphere, therefore, both of man's body, and soul, the realm of law is being visibly extended : and the borderland of uncertainty is being visibly thrust farther back. The number of things doubtful is gradually growing less, and the number of things certain is gradually growing greater. This increase of assurance in the knowledge of things physical, and mental, and moral, is the characteristic feature, and quality, of the knowledge of the modern age. It is, therefore, especially remarkable that in spiritual things, and in spiritual things alone, the modern age should be conspicuous not for its growth of assurance, but for its growth of doubtfulness. While other departments of man's nature are being more and more visibly encompassed with the bright cincture of certainty—while doubtfulness is everywhere disappearing, and assurance is everywhere becoming

manifest—it is singular that in the spiritual department of man's nature, and in that one department exclusively, the contrary operation is in process. Instead of increasing assurance there is increasing hesitation; instead of diminishing doubt there is diminishing certitude. The modern characteristic of religious knowledge is exactly the opposite of the modern characteristic of every other kind of knowledge. All other kinds of knowledge are remarkable for their growth in clearness, and certainty. In religious apprehensions alone does there appear to be, in our age, a development of dimness and doubt.

It is the object of this Chapter to examine into the meaning of this singular phenomenon; and to set forth what seem to be the principal causes of the development of doubt, and uncertainty, in religion; during an epoch conspicuous for growth of assurance, and certitude, in all other departments of knowledge.

We observe, at the outset, that modern doubt is more often of the nature of an all-surrounding atmosphere, than of a deep personal unsettlement of religious opinion. Modern doubt is more often around us than within. It is much more in the air than in the heart. There has probably never been an age since that of the Apostles when, in the case of individual believers, religious faith has been so clear, and firm, and sure, as in this modern age. It is, indeed, not possible for any one to avoid being influenced by the surrounding atmosphere, and the besetting environment. And, therefore, in the modern age, even the most intense believer must inevitably

be influenced by the environment of religious uncertainty, and the atmosphere of religious doubt. But on the believer this influence is like that of the wind on a much-tossed tree: it drives his spiritual roots deeper down. It is like the influence of hard discipline on a weak and misty brain: it both strengthens and clarifies. The surrounding air is charged with religious doubt; but every man who moves in Christian society is, at the same time, aware of a deepening intensity, and a more reasonable conviction, of belief among spiritually-minded believers.

Moreover, modern religious doubt shews no symptom of degenerating into absolute atheism. The modern doubter is seldom a foolish body: he does not, therefore, say: "There is no God."[1] The current of modern doubt has set far more strongly towards Theism, and Agnosticism, than towards Atheism. Modern doubt, indeed, tends towards the unsettlement of many accepted opinions on religious questions. It tends also to relegate the condition of man's existence after death to the dark territories of the Unknowable, and the Unknown: but it does not tend towards a categoric denial either of the existence of God, or of man's future state. On the contrary, there is an evident yearning among doubters to cling all the more firmly to the great teachings of (what is falsely called) Natural Religion, in proportion as they fall away from the still greater teachings which are distinctive of Revealed Religion. In proportion to men's disregard for the authority of Scripture is often their homage to the authority of Nature. They who deny the Incarnation of God, yet contend

[1] Ps. xiv. 1.

for His Fatherhood. Many who consider the Resurrection of Christ a fable, have yet no doubt of the personal immortality of each individual man. The darkest word uttered by thoughtful doubt concerning the personal existence of God, and man's future state, is the word of Agnosticism: "We do not know." It is not the Atheistic word: "We deny." Nor is it more than a minority of thoughtful doubters who are content even with the position of Agnosticism. The majority of doubters are as confident of the general truths of Natural Religion as they are dubious of the special truths of Revealed Religion.

In considering the causes of the present spread of religious doubt, it is important that neither of these facts should be lost sight of, viz.: the strong hold of many doubters on the fundamental teachings of Natural Religion, and the clarifying, and deepening, of faith among large numbers of spiritually-minded Christians. Remembering, then, both these qualifications of the general statement that our modern age is conspicuous for the spread of doubt in religious matters, and for the spread of certainty in matters not specifically religious, let us proceed to enquire into the causes of this modern extension of religious doubt.

(1) And I would place, as a first cause of modern religious doubt, the fore-mentioned fact of the great growth of full assurance in matters not distinctively religious. The age in which we live is not only an age of reason: it is also an age of deep desire for certainty. The characteristic feature of modern knowledge is not its reasonableness merely; but its love of proof also. Especially is proof, and proof

by experiment, the characteristic feature of the kind of knowledge for which the modern age is most eminently conspicuous. Physical science is the commanding science of the modern age: and the note, we are told, of physical science is that its laws are not only demonstrable to reason, but also largely provable by experiment. Many of the theories of physical science are capable of being tested, and tested continually, by the appliances of fact. In physical science men put their theories into practice; and if, in practice, the theories do not work, the theories are abandoned. In science every doctrine must square with every fact. There is no place for any absolute authority in science except the authority of rational demonstration provable by experiment. And as physical science is the most conspicuous and commanding department of modern knowledge; it follows that scientific methods are more generally applied in the modern age, than in any age preceding it, to every kind of knowledge, not excepting the knowledge specifically denominated "religious."

It is, however, obvious that scientific certainty is only possible within a very limited range. For if experiment alone be the final test of truth, nothing whatever can be proved to be true which took place in past time; unless it be an event of such a character that it can be re-produced at the present. What, then, shall we say of the test of experiment when applied to antiquarian and archæological research? How shall we prove by experiment that Cæsar came to Britain, or that the Black Prince fought at Crecy? We have abundant evidence, of other kinds, of the truth of each of these circumstances: but no evidence of

the strictly experimental kind. None of these events can be re-enacted before our eyes to-day, and being incapable of re-enactment they are incapable of demonstration by experiment; inasmuch as the capacity for continuous repetition is the prime desideratum of proof by experiment.

And even with regard to very many of the theories of physical science itself, how wholly unprovable they are, and ever must remain, if experiment is to be considered the only test of truth! No theory of the formation of the earth, *e.g.*, can, on this supposition, be proved to be true: because it is incapable of being proved by the experiment of forming a similar earth before our eyes to-day. And tried by this test of experiment, what becomes of the recent theories of evolution and development? So long as these theories confine themselves to the influence of environment, and the struggle for existence, and other cognate forces, upon the modifications of species, they are capable of proof by experiment. But if the theories be applied to genus, as distinct from species, they are absolutely without proof: inasmuch as no one has yet been able by experiment to evolve one genus from another, and different, genus. By diligent cultivation you may very highly develop the tints and forms of the tulip or the lily: or by persistent neglect you may reduce the various breeds of pigeon back again to the common rock-dove: thus demonstrating by experimental proof the influence of environment in modifying the appearances of plants and birds. But by no experiment has it yet been proved that one species can be developed from another, and different, species: far less one genus

from another, and different, genus.[1] No lily has ever been transmuted into another species of flower: no pigeon into another species of bird: no ape into a man, no man into an ape. Thus if demonstration by experiment be considered an essential of truth: then, not only all past history, but much present theory even of physical science, is not only unproved; it is, moreover, apparently unprovable.

Whether the doctrines of religion are not as frequently capable of proof by present, personal, experiment; as the doctrines of physical science, is a question which, in a future Chapter, will be examined.[2] It is here sufficient to repeat that if proof by continuous experiment be considered the only satisfactory test of truth, then all past historical events and many present scientific theories, are incapable of being known to be assuredly true; seeing that they are incapable of being proved by experiment. If everything is open to doubt which is not closed by the verdict of constantly reproducible proof, it is certainly not the teachings of religion which alone are doubtful. All history, and much science, are also doubtful. The fact, however, is, that the evidence of the truth of things, and of theories, depends not upon the demonstration of experiment alone. To a duly disciplined intellect other kinds of evidence carry great, if not equal, cogency. The evidence of

[1] Mr. Darwin does not himself extend the operation from species to species, or genus to genus, or family to family. He says (cf. "Origin of Species," p. 401) "the innumerable species, genera, and families, with which this world is peopled, are all descended, *each within its own class or group*, from common parents, and have all been modified in the course of descent."

[2] Cf. Chap. VII.

careful analogy, of authentic testimony, of the aptitude and power of the theoretical explanation to account for the condition of the things explained :— all these kinds of evidence weigh very heavily in the balances of truth. They do not amount to absolute demonstration: but they are sufficient for the guidance of a wise man in practical matters. They are sufficient also to render foolish, perhaps even culpable, the neglect of their testimony.

Nevertheless, in our modern age, the progress made by physical science (especially in those branches of it, such as surgery and mechanics, whose theories are mostly all capable of demonstration by experiment) has been so immense, and so brilliant, that it has created everywhere, and especially in the minds of scientists, an appetite for reducing all departments of knowledge beneath the dominion of what is called, "the scientific method." And as some, at least, of the doctrines of Christianity are incapable of being proved by experiment, there arises in the mind of the scientist a cloud of doubt concerning these particular doctrines; a cloud which by slow degrees envelops, in its dimness, the whole Creed of Christianity. This desire for exactitude and demonstration in religious matters—a desire spreading from the mind of the scholar in science to the minds of the people at large—I count as the first cause of the present prevalence of religious doubt.

(2) As the second cause I would count the failure, on the part of many persons, to apprehend the immensity of the number of things which they are daily called upon to do, without being quite certain of the actual nature of the things themselves. If,

on the one hand, we are encompassed by the certainties of law; on the other hand, we are encompassed by the utter uncertainties of knowledge. For if by faith we imply an element of trust: then it is not only in respect of the life to come that we live by faith. We live also our present life very largely by faith as well. The present world seems to be so constituted that men must, of necessity, either live by trust or not live at all. In the conduct of life there are very few things of which we are absolutely certain, and very many things of which we are absolutely uncertain. The general course, and nature, of things in the present world, seems constitutionally favourable to trust, and constitutionally adverse to doubt. If a man should refuse to eat anything until he was absolutely sure, without possibility of doubt, that it was wholesome; or to drink anything until he was quite sure, with chemical certainty, that his beverage contained no germ of disease; he would soon find his daily eating and drinking an intolerable burden of morbid anxiety. Similarly, if a man should refuse to dwell anywhere until he had ascertained indubitably that no deadly bacillus inhabited the place; he could never dwell anywhere except in a perpetually disinfected room. Thus whatever we do, and wherever we go, there is an all-pervading element of uncertainty in our actions and movements. The man who cannot lead his physical life on earth, in a large measure, on trust; cannot lead even that life brightly, and usefully. He who is always doubting about his food, and dreading the uncertain appropinquity of disease, soon degenerates into a valetudinarian and hypochondriac. The way of health and

strength, even in material existence, is, with reasonable safeguards, the way of trust; not the way of doubt.

Similarly with all other departments of human life. They seem to be largely ordered on the basis of uncertainty, and the principle of trust. Even in the realm of what we call our "knowledge," how few things we really know, or have for ourselves tested by experiment! Most of the things which we profess to know we really take on trust. Nearly all our geography we take on the word of other men, without visiting the far-off localities ourselves. A map which contained no countries except those which we had each visited for ourselves would not convey much geographical instruction to others. A good map of the world is a map which depicts the aggregate information of mankind at large: each geographer contributing what he himself has verified, and accepting in good faith from others the parts which they contribute. In geography, indeed, we can, if we choose, verify for ourselves the description of any locality given by another, by the simple process of visiting that locality. But we cannot thus verify for ourselves the greater part of what we call our "knowledge." All history, as we have seen, we are compelled to take on the testimony of others. In history the most we can do is to scrutinize the testimony, and put to searching tests the veracity of the witnesses:—but the narratives of history we cannot verify by the actual reproduction of the incidents themselves. Even in science, how few persons there are who could prove, by demonstration, the simplest theorems either of mathematics or physics: theorems

which they take on trust from others, and not only take on trust, but use on trust, every day of their lives.

The truth is that human life, in all its various ramifications, is an unending series of actions on trust. Every dose of medicine we take, we take on trust. Every time we act on our lawyer's advice, we act on trust. The very life-blood of the world's commerce is practical confidence, without actual certainty. The world's commerce is a gigantic exemplification of the necessity of trust in the conduct of human affairs. Eliminate trust—reasonable trust as distinguished from incontestable assurance—from the banking and trading life of the world; and the world's commerce would immediately cease to exist. Like as the husbandman trusts to the bounties of Nature, so the trader trusts to the integrity of his fellow-men—oftentimes men whom he has never seen, and men in whose character he confides on the mere hearsay of others. Without trust carried into action, without practical confidence in theoretical uncertainties, neither the harvests of husbandry nor the profits of commerce could possibly be reaped.

And as we mount the ladder of human action and human sentiment; as we ascend to the sphere of the highest human relationships—relationships such as those of friendship and marriage—we see more clearly still the prevalence, and the necessity, of trust in the world. It is, indeed, a singular, yet most suggestive, phenomenon, that the lower we descend in the scale of life, the greater approximation there is to certainty, and the greater capacity things appear to have for demonstration by experimental proof: but

the higher we ascend in the scale of life, the less there is of absolute certainty, and the greater is the scope for the practice of trust. It is in the realm of mere matter, and in the knowledge of material laws, that we approach most nearly to the certainties of demonstration—though, even in the realm of matter, every philosopher knows that the continuance, as distinct from the existence, of laws, is a matter of practical probability only, and not of demonstrable proof.[1] But as we ascend, in the scale of life, above the realm of merely material things; the less and less positive does our knowledge grow to be, and the more and more necessary is the practice of trust: till it comes to pass that when we reach the highest of all the earthly relationships of human life, we find that these relationships are incapable of existence, except on a basis of trust. Friendship and every manner of human affection are impossible apart from trust. Trust is the keystone in the great arch of human love. Whatever results the certainties of science may have achieved in the multiplication of man's material commodities; it is the uncertainties of human knowledge, and the consequent necessity for trust, which have produced in the higher realms of immaterial sentiment, the beauties of friendship, and the nobleness of love. The capacity for lofty and self-sacrificing trust is an essential part of the grandeur of the human mind and the splendour of the human heart. What is a hero? A hero is one who ventures everything not upon a mathematical

[1] According as signs have often or seldom failed, so their assurance is more or less, but never full and evident. Experience concludeth nothing universally (Hobbes's "Human Nature," ch. iv.).

certainty, but upon a tremendous uncertainty—yet an uncertainty to which magnificent possibilities are attached. And the glory of his heroism largely depends on the uncertainty of his venture. Take away all uncertainty from human life, and you take away all life's noblest and most glorious parts. Without uncertainty, life would be fatalistic: monotonously fatalistic. There would be no room for the display of adventurous heroism, or all-surmounting hope: or the sweet and great affection which loves, not because it knows, but because it trusts. It is trust which nourishes the most beautiful graces, and evokes the most noble aspirations in man. It is a law, as constant as the law of gravitation, that if we would live in the world healthily and happily, and *à fortiori* beautifully and heroically, we must trust in many things which we cannot prove: we must believe in many persons whose inmost thoughts and emotions are largely unknown to us; and we must venture on many hazards whose issues are radiant with glorious hope, but yet are by no means demonstrable by any immediate proof.

Such, then, being the natural constitution of the world in which we live—a constitution replete with uncertainties and demanding the exercise of trust in every department of life—is it rational to expect that, in religion, there will not be found many uncertainties, and much need for trust? Rather would it not almost seem as if the Author of our being, and the Director of the Universe, had so constituted man, and so ordered the general course of things, as to make faith easy and natural, and doubt difficult and unnatural—as if He had (so to say) compelled us

to live our present earthly life by faith, and on trust; in order thereby to train us, through a course of natural apprenticeship, for that higher faith, and that more spiritual trust, which are necessary to our realization of our future, infinite, and eternal, state of being? Among other causes of religious doubt, therefore, would seem to be the common failure to learn from the immensity of the number of things, in our present temporal life, of which we are wholly ignorant, and have either to accept on trust or not accept at all; that *à fortiori* it is to be expected that, in reference to our future state of being, there will be a vast number of things which we must either not accept at all, or else accept on simple trust.

(3) A third cause of religious doubt is a kind of personal incapacity to believe. There are multitudes who believe easily; there are also multitudes to whom belief is hard. Some persons are doubters by disposition, doubters all round: not doubters in religion alone, but doubters of things in general. Like St. Thomas, except they see they will not believe. The whole tendency of their disposition is towards distrust, and against belief. In all things they are slow to accept, quick to object. Even proof is not welcome to them in matters which, when proved, are unwelcome. Their natural temperament is a temperament of uncertainty and suspense. And if the temperament be active, rather than sluggish; it will take a militant delight in opposing faith, and in disseminating the germs of doubt.

This ingrained, natural, disposition to doubt is sometimes congenital: it is an innate birth-tendency both antecedent to, and independent of, reflection

and thought. In the young, it generally manifests itself in a belligerent eagerness to attack the existing order of things, in all departments of human life: social, political, religious. It betrays an overweening confidence in its own perfect right to destroy whatever is; and, in its own perfect wisdom to construct, upon the ruins of the existing order, an altogether improved, and better, state of things. Sometimes this belligerent disposition has its basis in the blood: —the quickness and the freshness of the blood: and is tranquillized by the mellowing influence of experience, and instructive years. But, in other persons, it remains to the end of life: and is even strengthened by the lapse of time. The growing years cannot teach or soften it. It, at length, hardens either into a general suspiciousness of temper, slow to acknowledge truth and goodness: or else into an intense, and exaggerated, individualism. Vanity, and unbridled egotism, are the common forms of this excessive individuality; and egotistic vanity is always slack to recognize authority, and quick to rebel against restraint. And seeing that religion is, by its very nature, a perpetual restraint and a most commanding authority; persons who are abnormally individualized, naturally rebel against religion by the very force of constitutional necessity. Their individualism fills the mind with thoughts of self. Their dislike of restraint leads them to resent authority; and their self-absorption, naturally combining with their disregard of powers higher than themselves, creates, by a kind of law, a personal incapacity to believe. For it seems to be a spiritual law, scarcely less universal than the laws of the physical universe,

that obedience is the condition of heavenly knowledge:[1] and emptiness of self a pre-essential to being filled with the fulness of faith. It is the spiritually hungry, not the richly self-satisfied, who are (nay, who, by the laws of the spiritual universe, alone can be) filled with eternal food.

(4) Another cause of doubt, closely akin to this natural doubtfulness of disposition, is the natural indifference, and aloofness, felt by multitudes of persons towards religion. The world of such persons is not a religious world. It is a world of business, or duty, or pleasure. "They have never in their whole lives experienced the love of God, the sense of sin, or the need of forgiveness. Often they are remarkable for the purity of their morals: many of them have strong and disinterested attachments and quick human sympathies: sometimes a stoical feeling of uprightness, or a peculiar sensitiveness to dishonour. It would be a mistake to say they are without religion. They join in its public acts: they are offended at profaneness or impiety: they are thankful for the blessings of life, and do not rebel against its misfortunes. Such men meet us at every step." They are pure, delicate, tranquil: but lacking in imagination, and impulsive enthusiasm, and shrinking fear. Mysticism is opposed to their nature. They do not deny the distinctive dogmas of religion: but they live apart from them. They do not disbelieve them; but they are silent when they are stated. Their disposition is sensible and placid. They have quiet and definite minds: but "they have forgotten that a quiet and definite mind is confined

[1] John vii. 17.

to a placid and definite world: that religion has its essence in awe, its charm in infinity, its sanction in dread: that its dominion is an inexplicable dominion: that mystery is its power."[1] In all such persons there is a natural disinclination towards the energies of religion: and a natural, though quiescent, doubt of its greatest, and most powerful, teachings.

(5) There is a fifth cause of doubt, upon which I desire not to dwell with undue emphasis; which yet, with due regard to truth, I cannot entirely omit. Very many religious doubters, as I have said, lead lives which are unquestionably incorrupt, and noble; lives which, in their purity and loftiness, put to shame the lives of some professing Christians. Yet, on the other hand, it would be dishonest to deny that sin does lie at the root of no inconsiderable part of religious doubt. Sin is the enemy of faith, and faith the enemy of sin. Between these two there can be neither peace, nor fellowship. Wherever sin grows strong by indulgence, faith grows weak by undermining. Other, even pure and innocent, causes may darken the soul, and shut the eyes of the spirit. But indulged, and unrepented, sin invariably destroys the pleasures of faith: and, in destroying the pleasures of faith, increases the willingness to doubt. Indulgence in sin makes the thought of God intolerable, and the prospect of accountable immortality a terror. And, in this condition of dread, the mind is open to every suggestion which throws doubt on the avenging personality of God, or the judgment of the world to come. Those books are most eagerly devoured which insinuate doubts concerning the Unseen and the

[1] Cf. Bagehot's "Essays," i. 38–40.

Eternal ; and those companious are most welcome whose jocund conversations, or whose brilliant speculations, tend to deaden the fears of faith, and to cast a halo of improbability around the awful judgment-seat of Christ.

Sometimes, indeed, the doubter is scarcely conscious that his doubts are the consequences of his sins. The sin may be a buried sin : a sin of long ago. But, from its grave, issue the poisonous exhalations which lay prostrate the religious energies ; and make blind the eyes of the spirit. Very subtle, yet very sure, are the evil results of sin. As Nature will yield her bounties only to those who are obedient to her laws, and will punish with many stripes those who disregard her behests :—so, in the spiritual universe, disobedience is punished with spiritual loss, and obedience alone is the way of life and light. They see God best who best obey God's will. They who wilfully persist in disobeying God's commandments, at last desire to doubt His existence ; and rejoice in any mountain of intellectual difficulty which may seem to hide them from His dreaded presence. In all such instances, the doubts of unbelief spring from an evil heart and an evil life.

(6) There is a sixth cause of doubt which is very different from the cause just now alluded to. It is an intellectual and quite honest cause ; not a cause in any way associated with moral obliquity, or indulgence in sin. This cause is the bitter perplexity into which multitudes of persons are thrown by the ordinary course of events, and the bewildering problems of human life. To hosts of thoughtful minds the world is a great riddle ; and human life

an insoluble conundrum. There seems such awful cruelty in Nature, the inequalities of human affairs are so baffling, the disappointments and calamities of daily life are often so utterly overwhelming, the woes of the heavily laden are so many, and the tears of the troubled in spirit so bitter—that, in sheer despair at solving the riddle, or at reconciling the cruelties of Nature with the goodness of God, thousands upon thousands of puzzled, and lacerated, and semi-stupified, persons seek for refuge in doubt; perhaps even in absolute denial of religion.

And it should move all right-minded persons to indignation, and wrath, when they see doubts such as these—doubts born of perplexity and suffering—treated by comfortable, and commonplace, Christians as if they were gross iniquity, and sin. Such doubts as these deserve, and need, our sympathy. The condemnation of them may be orthodoxy; but it is not Christianity. All men, I am quite sure, who have been touched with the charity of Christ, will seek to soothe, and to heal, such doubts as these: not to stab, and to vex, them with weapons of judgment. For deep down in these doubters' hearts there are often great spiritual emotions, and great spiritual desires; though the emotions are tortured, and the desires complex. Aye! it is the refinement of Pharisaic cruelty when those who are content in body, and mind, and estate, fling stones of condemnation at the doubts of those who have been torn from everything that seemed necessary to their happiness on earth. And, perhaps, in the Day of Judgment, there will be found to have been more true, and God-pleasing, faith in the doubts of the unhappy; than in the

contented, and unexamined, creeds, of the comfortable and the self-satisfied.

At the heart of all such doubts as these lies the problem of the existence of evil in the world. This problem is, both to doubter and believer alike, an altogether insoluble problem. Neither the doubts of the doubter, nor the faith of the believer, can work out the problem so as to give satisfaction to the universal intellect of mankind. The problem has baffled all ages, and all intellects. In olden times and in Eastern lands, the perplexed philosopher, gazing out upon the surging ocean of boundless contradictions and boundless miseries in the world, persuaded himself that there must be at least two gods—a god of darkness and a god of light, an evil god and a good god, Ahriman (as he styled them) and Ormuzd—striving for the mastery in the universe. And in modern days, throughout the civilized world, the same problem of the presence and power of evil, side by side with the presence and power of good, still perplexes, and defies, the human intellect. The doubter does not bring the problem any nearer to solution by his doubts: nor, if the problem be regarded as purely intellectual, does the believer contribute towards its solution by his faith.

Yet, although the problem may perhaps prove to be finally insoluble, even by the greatest human intellects; it ought not to be impossible to bring both doubters and believers into closer concord concerning it. At present, doubters and believers stand too far apart in attitudes of stern antagonism. Neither doubter nor believer earnestly endeavours to understand his antagonist's point of view. The believer

too often condemns all doubt as sin: and the doubter too often derides all faith as superstition. Both alike are one-sided. The doubter is generally analytical, and pessimistic; looking only on the sad, and bitter, aspects of human life (aspects which appear wholly incompatible with the sovereignty of a good and guiding Providence): and closing his eyes to the beautiful, and manifold, traces of that Providence deeply imprinted in the pathway of mankind: while, on the other hand, the believer is all-trustful and optimistic, closing his eyes to the red teeth and mangling claws of Nature, and looking only on the brighter aspects of human life—its heroism and powers of self-sacrifice, its benevolence and thirst for righteousness, its power of bringing good even out of evil, and its unconquerable desire for eternal life and eternal truth.

The doubter is, moreover, often kept apart from the believer, not only by their mutual and antagonistic one-sidedness; but also by the width of difference which too often sunders them from each other, in respect to the right use and exercise of reason. To the non-believer, reason is the supreme and sovereign faculty in man. The problems of wrong and suffering are brought to the bar of reason; and if these problems cannot be solved by reason, the unbeliever refuses to allow them to be solved by faith. On the other hand, the believer too often denies to reason its proper force and authority in relation to faith: and, in his denial of the just claims of reason, the believer greatly intensifies the rationalist's tendency to doubt.

(7) Another cause of religious doubt is the pitiless

exile into which doubters are often driven by over-dogmatic Christians. That God will bring man into judgment for his beliefs, as well as for his actions, is beyond question.[1] But God's judgments alone can be just: for God alone is all-knowing. Moreover, the Creator has a sovereign right to judge His creatures even for their thoughts. But between creature and creature, this right does not exist. Its usurpation is also expressly forbidden. If there is one commandment in the Sermon on the Mount more plain than another it is this: "Judge not, Condemn not."[2] And yet, in the very teeth of this most obvious prohibition, men judge men; and men condemn men. And this not for actions: but for opinions. Such judgments and condemnations are a frequent cause of religious doubt. To ostracize, and rail at, doubt is among the most potent of all means for developing, and confirming it.

Yet, notwithstanding this universal experience of the result of judging and condemning doubt, even the most honest and painful doubts are often still treated by professing Christians as tantamount to sin. Moreover, these condemnations are sometimes not merely the thoughtless and irresponsible condemnations of individual Christians: they are also the deliberate and authorized condemnations of collective Churches. Look, *e.g.*, at the Athanasian Creed. Except in its minatory sentences, the Athanasian Creed is a most valuable part of the heritage of the Church of Christ: inasmuch as it is the most brave, and the most powerful, of all the efforts ever attempted by the human intellect to bring the Incomprehensible

[1] John iii. 18. [2] Luke vi. 37.

Nature of the Eternal Godhead within reach of the apprehension of finite man. But the minatory sentences—what a stumbling-block they are to multitudes of thoughtful and high-minded persons. For upon whom do the condemnations of those sentences chiefly fall?[1] Not upon immoral persons, but upon religious doubters—upon those who hesitate, or refuse, to believe a number of splendid, yet for the most part highly metaphysical, propositions concerning the Unsearchable Nature of the Mysterious Trinity.

And if we go outside the Church of England the same harsh treatment of religious doubt attracts our notice. In the National Covenant, or Confession of Faith of the Kirk of Scotland, there are contained large numbers of distinct propositions; many of which are propositions of disputable theology, many also of mere ecclesiastical discipline, and comparatively few of indisputably ethical, or spiritual, piety. Yet this bulky Confession, bristling with contentious propositions, declares itself to be "the only true Christian faith and religion, pleasing God and bringing salvation to man:" and, therefore, all contrary religion is "to be abhorred, detested, and condemned." The same spirit of intolerance, still farther grievously intensified, breathes through the decrees of the Council of Trent. Against whom are the anathemas of the Council of Trent chiefly thundered forth? Not against those who violate the Decalogue, and fall below the standard of Christ's

[1] I say "chiefly:" because it is often forgotten that, although the Athanasian Creed at its commencement, and throughout its main course, condemns those, who do not keep whole and undefiled the Catholic Faith: yet, as part of that Faith, it says, at the end, "they that have *done good* shall go into life everlasting: and they that have *done evil* into everlasting fire."

teachings; but against those who doubt, or deny, divers uncertain, and most disputable, ecclesiastical declarations.[1]

And does not the same narrow, intolerant, spirit still penetrate no small part of modern Christian teaching? Hundreds of thousands of sermons are preached in Christendom every Sunday. What is their main theme? Are they dissertations on mint, and anise, and cummin; or pleadings for judgment, mercy, and truth? Are they the declamations of priests desirous to rule; or of prophets desirous to save, mankind? In dealing with doubt, does the preacher offer to the doubter the hand of a brother's love; or crush him beneath the rod of a tyrant's condemnation? Do preachers clasp doubters warmly to their hearts, and at least try to understand their difficulties: or do they thrust them forth into cold, and distant, exile? Ah, my brothers of the clergy! you and I are among the greatest of all doubt-makers in the world. By our pretended infallibilities; by our confident, yet dubious dogmas; by our want of appreciation of, and sympathy with, anxious, sensitive doubters; by the prominence we give in our sermons to the ceremonials, and literalisms, of

[1] Whosoever shall say there are more or less than seven sacraments (can. i. sess. 7): whosoever shall say that in the sacrifice of the Mass the offering up is no more than giving us Christ to eat (can. i. sess. 22): or that the sacrifice is not propitiatory and profitable for the quick and the dead for sins, pains, satisfactions and other necessities (can. iii. sess. 22): or that every faithful Christian should receive the Eucharist in both kinds (can. i. sess. 21): or that the whole of Christ is not received in the bread (can. iii. sess. 21): or that Indulgences are useless (dec. iii. sess. 25): or that matrimony is to be preferred to single life (can. ix. sess. 24)—let him be accursed. . . . Such are some of the astonishing grounds upon which the Tridentine Fathers agreed to declare that mankind would be accursed!

Christianity ; by our frequent neglect of the spirit, and the spirituality, of the Gospel—we often multiply and strengthen the religious doubts of mankind. Cultured minds, and sensitive hearts, feel an instinctive shrinking from the aggressive, slashing, style of the commonplace preacher. The loud, and often shallow, assertiveness of the pulpit of itself irritates the tender thinker. And when the thinker is earnest and profound ; when his doubts have been born from the womb of deep distress : or have arisen from a strong intellectual passion for making all things clear—then, if the preacher minimizes the difficulties of faith ; if he rhetorically avoids the real crux of religious problems ; if, with an air of superiority, he dismisses a half-argued case with a verdict against the unheard doubter, and in favour of himself, the voluble preacher ; the result is invariably an increase of the doubts in the doubter's mind.

Few causes are, I believe, more conducive to the spread of religious doubt than sermons which either unduly minimize the great difficulties of faith ; or which fail to appreciate the standpoint of the doubter, or which conclude all doubt in the category of sin. Especially is this the case when, by inapt quotations, even the Holy Scriptures are wrested to prove the sinfulness of honest doubt.[1] Over and over again,

[1] The vast importance of faith, even dogmatic faith, cannot be too strongly urged, when urged in tones of sympathizing charity. But a *literal* rendering of all such passages as Mark xvi. 16 (which is not unquestionably authentic, cf. Revised Version) or John iii. 18 would imply the condemnation of all those who have never heard of Christ, *i.e.* of the great majority of mankind—which is surely a supposition altogether too horrible to be entertained ! And if we adopt any other than a strictly literal rendering of such passages, is not the rendering of charity more consonant with the general tone of the Gospel than the rendering of condemnation ?

when on earth, Our Saviour Christ denounced His thrice-repeated woes on the Scribes and Pharisees, the orthodox religionists of His day: yet He rarely condemned the Sadducees, although the Sadducees believed in neither resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit. To no one, among men, could the doubts and the denials of the Sadducees have been so clearly false as to Him Who was Himself the Resurrection and the Life. Yet, even to Him, an honest, doubting Sadducee was more tolerable than a self-righteous, though believing, Pharisee.[1]

(8) In close relation to the cause, last assigned, for religious doubt, is the common confusion of the very essence of Christianity with its mere traditions and accidents. If ever great and glorious truths had just reason to cry, "Defend us from our friends;" those truths are the truths of Christianity. For the apologists of Christianity are not seldom its unintentional betrayers. They confound the real with the unreal, the husk of truth with its kernel, the primitive simplicity of the Gospel with the accretions of mediæval scholasticism; traditions of men with revelations from God. And so it comes to pass that, in the day of battle, when the decaying outworks have to be surrendered, it seems to the onlooker as if the citadel had fallen; and, in the day of fiery winnowing, when the chaff of husky tradition is consumed, it seems as if the wheat of eternal truth were also being destroyed. This confusion of the wheat with the chaff, and the outworks with the citadel, by the apologists of the Christian faith is a very fruitful source of religious doubt.

[1] Cf. p. 26.

Not, indeed, that the apologists themselves are conscious of the weakness, and the falsity, of their defences. These false teachings are rarely known by their teachers to be false. The teachers quite earnestly believe their teachings to be true; just as the old geographers thought it true that the solid earth was encompassed by a circumfluent ocean, and that beyond the pillars of Hercules were the rivers of Lethe: or as the old astronomers thought it true that the earth was the centre of the whole system of fixed stars and planetary suns. These old geographers and astronomers were veracious enough: they truly taught what they firmly believed. Yet their belief was false to fact; entirely out of harmony with the truth, and reality, of things themselves.

Similarly with some modern Christian apologists and Christian teachers. They truly teach what they firmly believe. But their faith is false to facts—false to the facts of the Gospel History, false to the facts of human nature, false to the facts of scientific discovery, false to the facts of everyday experience. By this flagrant, though unintentional, falseness and confusion, much religious doubt has been engendered. It is of the first importance, therefore, that the realities of Christianity should no longer be interwoven with all manner of unrealities which are not Christianity; and that, both in teaching and in defending Christianity, a broad line of demarcation should be boldly, and truthfully, drawn between the things which are essential, and the things which are not essential, to the life and the light of the Christian faith.

Hitherto no such line of demarcation has been clearly, and wisely, drawn. Human theories of

inspiration, *e.g.*, have been confounded, and co-ordinated, with the substance of the teachings inspired. Traditions about the chronology of the Bible have been put on a level with the glorious messages of the Bible itself. Metaphysical subtleties concerning the double Nature of the Lord Jesus, have been exalted to the same pinnacle of importance as the plain, historical, realities of Our Saviour's Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension. Human theories of absolution, and of the efficacy of sacraments, have been defended with the same ardour as the divine gift of pardon, or the effectual grace of God the Holy Ghost. The logic of theologians has thus usurped the throne properly sacred to the direct revelations of God Himself; and the secondary dogmas of the Schools have been confounded with the primary doctrines of the Scriptures. With what result? With the result that when men have felt themselves compelled to doubt the dogmas of the Schools, they have been driven to doubt the doctrines of the Scriptures also. In dethroning the usurper, they have dethroned the sovereign. In overthrowing the false buttresses, raised by the mistaken defenders of the faith, they have injured the true temple of the faith itself.[1]

The blame, however, of this great confusion, and of the religious wreckage so often caused by it, does not lie wholly, and exclusively, at the doors of the mistaken defenders of the Christian faith. It is true that the apologists of Christianity have greatly injured

[1] The gross, and materialistic, manner in which some of the noblest and most spiritual doctrines of Christianity—doctrines such as those of Sacrifice and Atonement—have been frequently represented, has caused many doubts.

Christianity by maintaining the traditions of the Church, and the fallible opinions of Christian men; with the same fervour as the historic revelations of the Scriptures, and the necessary foundations of the faith. But some share of responsibility for this confusion lies at the door of doubters themselves. Religious doubters do not themselves always discriminate with exactitude, and perspicuity, between the essentials and the non-essentials of the Christian faith. Yet if they will but pause and examine with care into the nature of the questions as to which they stand in doubt; they will, I think, be surprised to find how large a proportion of their difficulties arises from the traditions and commandments of men, and from doctrines of an altogether human origin; such, *e.g.*, as some of the peculiar doctrines of Calvin or the Pope. Of how many of the Beatitudes do earnest doubters find themselves in doubt? Are they in doubt concerning the Lord's Prayer, or the Ten Commandments, or the original articles of the Apostles' Creed? It is not of teachings such as these that earnest, thoughtful men usually stand in doubt. Doubt, in the beginning at least, frequently arises from dissatisfaction with the dubious tenets of men; not from difficulties attaching to the plain doctrines of God.

Seek, therefore, if ye be honest doubters, to disentangle the subtle from the simple, the essential from the non-essential, in the popular theories of the Christian faith: and you will almost surely find that it is theories subtle and non-essential which have brought tempests of darkness over your spirit, and have threatened total shipwreck to your faith. You

know the story of Jonah. You remember how the poor mariners, "when there was a mighty tempest in the sea, and their ship was like to be broken,"[1] threw overboard their innocent wares, and their honest substantial goods; if so be they might assuage the tempest, and rescue the ship. But all was of no avail so long as the runaway and dangerous prophet lay lurking in the sides of the ship. The only hope of rescue was to cast away the fatal prophet. Ye doubters! be not like unto those Mediterranean mariners. A tempest of doubt is upon you: the ship of your eternal life is threatened with destruction. What are you to do? Fling overboard first, not last, the prophets who have brought you into peril; and you shall save intact the substantial goods, and innocent wares, of eternal truth and redeeming faith. There is all the difference in the world between some of the subsidiary prophets of Christianity; and its original Founder, Christ. Do not, then, in your doubtings, confound human opinions with divine truths. To gain peace, and safety, Jonah must be cast into the sea. But the Greater than Jonah[2] must abide in our ship if we would have a spiritual calm, and reach the eternal shore.

(9) Another principal cause of religious doubt is the unworthiness of the lives of so many professing Christians. In numberless instances, the profession of Christianity exercises no purifying, or exalting, influence whatever on the characters of the professors. Neither in thought, nor word, nor act, are many Christian professors better, or nobler, than non-Christian persons. In some instances they are

[1] Jonah i. [2] Matt. xii. 41.

conspicuously worse. For their Christian profession is only a cloke for their sin; and if iniquity be perpetrated under the cloke of religion, the guilt of religious hypocrisy is added to the guilt of common sin. Especially is this discrepancy between profession and practice conspicuous in those who, in public life, talk much of religion; but, in private life, exhibit few signs of religion's restraining, and exalting power. When the clergy, *e.g.*, are censors in the pulpit of the very habits to which they themselves are addicted in society, not only does their pulpit speech lose all its uplifting power; but grave doubts are engendered concerning the truth of the doctrines preached by them. Every inconsistency of the preacher is a deadly blow at the doctrine which he preaches.

Similarly with all other Christian professors. When the world sees that Bible-readers, and hymn-singers, and prayer-makers, and strong sacramentarians, are grasping or shaky in business, envious or fickle in society, selfish or slanderous in conversation, overbearing or ungentle at home—the world falls into doubt, or at least into indifference, concerning both the verity, and the value, of a religion which does not produce better results upon those who make most profession of it.

It is, of course, utterly unjust thus to judge Christianity, not by its essential teachings and its true disciples; but by its accidental traditions and false professors. It is like judging a tree, not by its own fruits; but by the foreign parasites which cling to its branches. But though most unjust, it is yet most common, thus to judge Christianity. And this being the case, great is the condemnation of those

who, by their false professions, bring disrepute, or doubt, on the faith of Christ. Great, too, is the necessity laid upon all true Christians to endeavour at least—however hard the task—to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things; thus commending the truth of their religion by the clear exhibition of its unmistakeable fruits.

(10) Another cause of religious doubt is the great negligence frequently displayed by doubters in the cultivation of faith. Large numbers of doubters never take anything like sufficient pains either in pruning their doubts, or in cultivating their faith. Faith is a splendid, yet very sensitive, plant—it is the tree of life from the garden of God. But it is a tree which can thrive only in its own proper environment; under its own proper conditions of soil, and moisture, and sun. It will not grow in shallow, stony ground; nor in public thoroughfares hardened by heavy, trampling feet; nor in weedy and untended fields. No tree requires greater deepness of earth; or greater freedom from noxious weeds; or more frequent watering with dew and rain; or more light from the sun; or more strength from the wind—than the tree of faith. Yet how few they are who give earnest heed to the culture of faith! And when faith is so carelessly cultivated, it is only natural that doubt should grow apace.

I am persuaded that a very great deal of religious doubt is wholly due to the neglected culture of intelligent faith. And this I say, not out of any lack of sympathy with every manner of honest doubt, but as a clear induction from the numerous instances of doubt which have been made known to

me. Doubt is, very often indeed, of the doubter's own making. The doubter first nourishes his doubts in silence. He keeps them to himself. He is too reserved, or too timid, to make them known to others. Like a sufferer from some internal disease, who keeps his pains a secret, even from his own physician; so the secret doubter lays his difficulties open to no friend or counsellor. He is too modest, or too shy, to lay bare his religious perplexities; or to ask openly any questions concerning the hard problems of the faith. Thus his doubts grow by secret and silent nursing.

More than this. Not only does the doubter, in the first stages of his doubt, ask no questions openly from his friends; but he does not even read such books as are calculated to explain his problems, and satisfy his doubts. On the contrary, he reads only one side of the question; and that the doubting side. Just as many believers never hear, or read, what is to be said against the faith; so many doubters neither hear, nor read, what is to be said for the faith. In all such cases, both faith and doubt alike are one-sided, and unintelligent. And as they are not true and honest believers, who wilfully shut their eyes to the difficulties of faith; so neither are they true and honest doubters, who wilfully shut their eyes to the difficulties of doubt. Both believers and doubters alike should seek to understand the other side. Too often, however, believers shun the society of doubters; and doubters shun the society of believers. Or when they meet, they do not meet with ease and openness. In their discussions upon religious questions there is generally either an

artificial restraint, or an extravagant hostility. They are either too silent, or too cynical. Either the dread of saying something unpleasant, or else a delight in saying something outrageous, frequently appears to embarrass the discussion of religious questions between believers and doubters. And so it comes to pass that believers often move exclusively in the society of believers; and doubters in the society of doubters.

Thus doubt rarely comes into touch with simple and intelligent faith. Doubters eagerly peruse those magazines and books which confirm their doubts; while such writings as those of Paley, and Butler, and Lightfoot, and Mozley, are left unread.[1] Attacks upon the Bible are enjoyed; but the Bible itself is unstudied. Sermons are ridiculed; prayer ceases; worship is abandoned; both the sacrament, and the practice, of self-sacrifice are discontinued; the culture of faith is entirely neglected—and so, like every other gift which is untended and unfed, faith falls into decrepitude, or dies away in great darkness. Uncultivated faith is thus, in many instances, the principal cause of religious doubt.

In a very true sense, the doubts which arise from this neglect of faith-culture may be said to be doubts of ignorance; if by the term "ignorance" be understood not intellectual ignorance, but spiritual ignorance. And of all forms of ignorance, spiritual ignorance is the most common. Spiritual ignorance

[1] "It has been the fortune of Paley's 'Philosophy' to be of late years very unduly depreciated; it is, however, one of the masterpieces of the eighteenth century" (Lecky, v. 171). May not also the great steadiness in theological thought of the Cambridge men, as a body, be partly due to their compulsory acquaintance with this great master's method?

prevails in every class, and rank of men; and, not least of all, in the class which is vulgarly called "the educated class." For in religion, the educated class is, broadly speaking, the most uneducated of all classes. Indeed the whole modern notion of education, in every rank of society, is fast becoming secularized and non-religious. It is becoming a notion fit only for creatures whose highest vocation is to make money, and to please themselves, and at last to find permanent annihilation in the grave. Modern educators have largely eliminated the idea of man's immortality from their conception of education. Technical education is everywhere loudly demanded; but religious education is barely more than tolerated. Our recently-founded Universities are almost exclusively secular seminaries. Education codes altogether ignore man's true divinity. Schools relegate religion to a place of fifth-rate importance in their curriculum. Parents are anxious not that their children should be Christ-like; but that they should be clever and successful. Teachers teach their pupils "how to get on in the world;" not how "to live godly in Christ Jesus."[1] The whole atmosphere of modern society, and the dominant ideals of modern education, are increasingly non-religious and unspiritual. The knowledge of God is fast tending to become (as far as education can make it so) an unknown knowledge in the modern world. For decency's sake the Bible is retained in the curriculum of schools; but little time is devoted to its real study. Whatever else modern education may be, it is not spiritual education; or education which takes

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 12.

account of man's present divinity, and future state of being. It is an education well suited to beings wholly material and mortal; but not worthy of beings with an immaterial, and immortal, destiny awaiting them. From the Christian point of view, indeed, all innocent knowledge of every kind is good; it is both a pleasure and a power. For true Christian education is physical, and intellectual, and spiritual; but an education which is physical and intellectual, without being spiritual also (whatever else it is), is not a Christian education. It is an education which fails to keep alive in man the sense of immortality; and which greatly fosters doubt by its gross neglect of the culture of faith.

Before proceeding to consider, at some length, the most fruitful, yet generally the least noticed, of all the causes of religious doubt, we may here allude to a few subsidiary causes; which are unquestionably operant in the production of religious doubt, though not, perhaps, to the extent of the causes which have been already mentioned.

First, among these subsidiary causes of religious doubt, may be reckoned, in the modern age, the increasing knowledge of the non-Christian religions of the world. Within days quite recent, all religions, outside Christianity, were supposed by Christians to be a species of devil-religions; religions without light, without goodness, without blessing for men. But with the new knowledge of the great non-Christian religions, has come the necessity for a complete change of attitude towards them. The comparative study of religion—a study founded upon exact examination, and careful collation, of the sacred

books of the various religions of the world—has revealed the tremendous fact that all the principal world-religions have not a few features, both of dogma and precept, in common with Christianity: that the doctrine of the Incarnation, *e.g.*, is not the exclusive possession of Christians, nor yet the doctrine of the Trinity; while such precepts as—"Recompense evil with good;" "Feed the hungry;" "Clothe the naked;" "Succour the sick:" were in vogue centuries before they were promulgated by Christianity.

This discovery of co-partnership, and partial community, between Christianity and other religions (which formerly were supposed to be nothing but darkness and iniquity) has operated as a shock to many Christian minds, and has caused considerable misgiving. To others, the discovery has come with all the charms of attractive novelty; with the result, in some instances, of accounting other religions, Buddhism for example, a mode more fashionable than Christianity.

It is, however, but the common way of mankind to exaggerate the importance of new discoveries, and to be turned upside down by novelties. It always takes time to put each new discovery in its proper place in relation to the whole body of truth. Not till the glamour and illusions of the morning mist have died away, can any novelty be seen in its true and right proportions. And judging from the continuance in firm Christian faith of many of the most advanced students of non-Christian religions, it would appear to be likely that the ultimate effect of discovering the true character of the non-Christian religions of the world will be a twofold effect. First; to confirm,

and enlarge, the great Pauline announcement that, among no race of men, has God ever left Himself without witness:[1] and, secondly, to reveal, even in doctrines and precepts which they share partly in common, how much higher, more effectual, and more grand, the doctrines and precepts of Christianity really are than those of any other religion which has either preceded, or followed, it. Meanwhile, in its initial stages, the study of Comparative Religion is at least an unsettler of much religious opinion, if not the cause of some actual doubt.

Then, too, the growth of the critical spirit tends towards the increase of religious doubt. As the religious spirit is often uncritical, so the critical spirit is often non-religious. It is of the essence of the critical spirit to be cold, analytical, keen in discerning discrepancies, slow to acknowledge mysteries, iconoclastic, self-confident. The critical spirit is not infrequently all head, and no heart. Sometimes, too, it has self on the brain. But, with all its obvious faults and tumours, the critical spirit is neither wholly, nor essentially evil. Like ice, it lowers the temperature; but, in torrid times, to lower the temperature is to do some good. The critical spirit cannot create, it cannot even vitalize; but it can raise an alarm, and it can destroy. And to alarm men is sometimes to save them. And to destroy rubbish and falsehood, is to prepare the way for truth and righteousness.

In the realm of religion, the critical spirit has sounded many alarms, and destroyed much rubbish. "With consummate inconsiderateness," says Bacon,

[1] Acts xiv. 17; cf. also Rom. i. 18–21.

"some of the moderns have endeavoured to build a system of Natural Philosophy on the first Chapter of Genesis, the Book of Job, and other parts of Scripture: seeking thus the dead amongst the living."[1] The critical spirit has, in our day, practically destroyed this Biblical Philosophy of Nature, falsely so called. It has taught us not to look for our astronomy in the Bible, nor for our religion in the stars. It has bidden us, in tones of chilling scorn, to bury dead theories in the tombs of the dead past. And so far it has done good. But it is after all a freezing spirit. It chills the warmth of worship; it quenches the fires of zeal; it checks the emotions of awe. And where awe is checked, and zeal is abated, and worship is chilled:—doubt is encouraged and increased. For doubt is like an arctic plant; pushing its dark, stunted, unperfumed, growths above the cold surface of unmelted snows.

Different from the critical spirit, which despite its coldness is often truth-searching, is the bombastic spirit of showy cleverness; a spirit which is no more intellectual power than the froth on the wave is the power of the tide. This ignorant cleverness is an absolutely certain producer of religious doubt. The self-satisfied glory of its delusive brilliance is entirely incompatible with deep, humble, self-renouncing faith. The conceit of cleverness is incapable of either greatly believing, or greatly knowing. It cannot greatly know; for great knowledge, as all sages tell, needs the help of humility. It cannot greatly believe; for great faith, as the Lord Jesus said, is only possible to the childlike.[2]

[1] "Novum Organon," bk. i. ch. lxv. [2] Matt. xviii. 3; xix. 14.

Another subsidiary cause of religious doubt is the mistaken, and false, notion that we either can, or ought, to understand everything; whereas the number of things altogether unintelligible to us is plainly immense. And the more we know, the more we perceive how little is knowable. Ignorance will confidently profess to understand, and explain, everything. Knowledge stands humbly in awe before the hosts of things —hosts which no man can number—that are both inexplicable and unintelligible. When this preponderating unintelligibility of things first becomes known to us—when first we begin to perceive the dim and vast outline of things incomprehensible: such as infinitude, eternity, fate, free-will, the origin of evil, and the like—we fall back baffled: and the sense of being baffled gives occasion to doubt.

In the nursery, and at our mother's knee, many things now wholly unintelligible appeared quite easy, and plain. The bright and simple creed of childhood, often in after years, grows very difficult and dark. Foundations, apparently sure, fall from under our feet. Truths which once seemed luminously clear, vanish out of view.

> "It is not now as it hath been of yore,—
> Turn wheresoe'er I may,
> By night or day,
> The things which I have seen I now can see no more."[1]

Instead of the delight of early certainty comes the torment of "obstinate questionings;" instead of the glory of celestial light, the shadows of terrestrial gloom; instead of golden dreams of heaven, leaden doubts whether heaven even is.

[1] Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality."

Out of doubts such as these, however, is often evolved at last a great, and strong, faith. In our childhood we thought we could grasp the rainbow: and, at first, it is a pain to find that the rainbow hopelessly recedes before our pursuing grasp, until it ultimately vanishes, a baseless insubstantiality. But, at length, the pain ceases; we recover from our disappointment; and forgetting the rainbow, we look toward the sun. The sun is far away, but it is a constant orb. Its light is an unfailing comfort, an unfailing guide. So is it with religious doubts when caused by the vanishings of the creeds of childhood. The faith resting on rainbows disappears; and its disappearance is, at first, utter misery. But after the first shocks of pain, the disappointed heart turns upward to the Eternal Sun; from whence streams down unfailing light, and life, and joy.[1]

Another subsidiary cause of doubt is the facile supposition that, if the doctrines of Christianity are essential to salvation, then those doctrines ought to be of such a nature that we could not possibly resist them. Or, in other words, the supposition is that whatever in life is most important ought to be most plain, and altogether irresistible. But without considering what ought to be—of which, indeed, there

[1] "The multifarious instincts of social existence do much to shake the young edifice of faith. The driving strength of stormy passions of all kinds undermines the walls of the fabric, and when at last the bolt of adversity strikes full upon the keystone of the arch, upon the self of man or woman, weakened and loosened by the tempests of years, the whole palace of the soul falls in, a hopeless wreck, wherein not even the memory of outline can be traced, nor the faint shadow of a beauty which is destroyed for ever. But there are some whose interests in this world are not strong enough to shake their faith in the next: whose passions do not get the mastery, and whose self is sheltered from danger by something more than the feeble defence of an accomplished egotism" (Saracinesca, 66).

is something lower than absurdity in deeming ourselves, with all our ignorance and incapacity, to be competent judges—we can clearly see that it is not in religion alone, that things momentous are also things both resistible and obscure. In everyday life and in secular things, the same sort, both of obscurity and resistibility, is very common in matters of the greatest moment.[1] The remedy for diseases which threaten life are often hidden, and hard to find. The laws on which the happiness of mankind depend are nowhere irresistible laws. The passions of men overthrow reason just as they overthrow faith. Whatever may be the origin, and the ultimate issue, of the present condition of things; that condition is clear and unmistakeable. It is a condition in which great pains and trouble are necessary to the discovery of matters of supreme moment. It is also a condition in which, under the rushing tyranny of licentious appetites, rashness is able to overthrow reason, and folly to defeat wisdom. But as, in the world of reason, no one doubts the momentousness of things because they are hidden, or the importance of wisdom though defeated by folly; so, in the world of religion, it is no sufficient cause for doubting the vast importance of Christian doctrines because they are hard to be understood, or because their evidence is not irresistible and all-compelling.[2]

Men are also rendered inclinable to doubt, not only by extreme poverty and bewildered despair; but

[1] "In History and in Nature alike many things inscrutable are certain" (Carlyle's "Past and Present").

[2] A similar course of reasoning applies both to the recency of Christ's coming to the world, and the comparative slowness in the growth of the world's knowledge of His Advent.

also by luxury, wealth, ease, leisure, and great self-contentment. "Innocent amusement," says Laurence Oliphant, "is the most deadening of all things. Frantic gaiety brings its stings of conscience: but calm enjoyment produces a permanent *Kief* which should be watched." "How few there are," writes Harriet Beecher Stowe, "who make money, who do not sacrifice their spiritual and nobler natures to do it."[1] Moreover, in a state of contented worldliness, it is easier and pleasanter to doubt than to believe. The man of easy leisure has a natural disinclination to come to a decision on religious matters; particularly as decision involves, by consequence, the practice of diligence, of restraint, of self-sacrifice. The leisurely, and inactive, man has a natural love for being undecided; because he considers that indecision leaves him free. Whether the licence of indecision, however, is the true liberty which alone makes a man free; is a question of both first and last importance for the undecided to consider.

Having thus briefly recounted some of the subsidiary causes of religious doubt; we may now return to the main course of this Chapter, and consider the last of the principal causes of religious doubt: a cause, commonly overlooked, yet of all causes the most strong, and the most searching, in its results. This cause may be defined as the complete disproportion both in the personal development, and the personal interests, of the majority of men.

Man, as we saw in the Chapter on the Nature of Faith, is a complex being. He is compounded, in his triune individuality, of body, soul, and spirit; and

[1] "My Wife and I," p. 159.

each of these parts of his compound nature possesses its own proper, and peculiar, faculties. The faculties of the body are motion and sense; the faculties of the soul are such as conscience, reason, emotion, will; the faculties of the spirit are faith, and the powers which are the offspring of faith. The complete and well-proportioned man is the man in whom each of these three parts, or faculties, is fully developed in due relation to the rest. And that man is incomplete, and disproportioned, in whom any one of the three parts, or faculties, is abnormally developed; without due regard to the development of either of the two remaining faculties or parts.

And what is chiefly noticeable, in connection with the Causation of doubt, is the universal law; that the undue, and inharmonious, development of any one of the three parts of which each individual man is composed, is invariably, and by a kind of necessity, adverse to the natural development of both the other parts. An undue development of body is injurious to the due development of both soul and spirit. An undue development of soul is injurious to the due development of both body and spirit. And an undue development of spirit is injurious to the due development of both body and soul. Or, in other words, an abnormal physical development is adverse to a normal psychical, and spiritual, development. An abnormal pyschical development is adverse to a normal physical, and spiritual, development. An abnormal spiritual development is adverse to a normal physical, and psychical, development.

It is, moreover, of great importance to observe that there seems to be in each individual *a fixed, and limited amount of latent energy or force.* This fixed amount of latent force constitutes the basis of the possibilities of development of which each individual is capable. This basal amount and quality of latent force is different in different men ; and these differences of force form the differences of individuality. This latent force may also either lie dormant through neglect or want of exercise ; or by cultivation it may be developed to its full strength and capacity ; and, in course of development, may exhibit a fertility and power altogether unsuspected, even by its possessor, when in its latent condition. Yet the limits of the force in each individual are absolutely fixed. An undue amount of force, therefore, cannot be spent upon the development of any single part of man's triune nature ; except at the cost of one, or both, of the two other parts. Finite man has not infinite powers. His power, even of interesting himself in things, is a limited power. If, *e.g.*, he interests himself unduly in himself ; he is thereby incapacitated from duly interesting himself in things outside himself. It is, therefore, not a speculative doctrine, but an actual fact, that selfishness is inimical to culture of every noble kind ; whether the culture be intellectual, or moral, or spiritual. Similarly with absorption in any single subject, of whatever sort the subject may be. The greater the absorption in any single subject, the less capacity remains for attention to other subjects. Of course the greater the man, the greater is his power of interesting himself in things all round. But the capacities even of the

greatest men are limited:[1] and the thought, the attention, the time, the interest which is devoted to any one subject (especially if the interest amounts to intense, magnetic absorption) subtracts from the time, the interest, the attention, and the thought which remains to be devoted to any other subject.

Variety of interest often appears to increase the amount of force possessed by a single individual: and, indeed, it may practically increase that force, by relaxing the energies which have become jaded in consequence of monotonous concentration on a single topic; and by refreshing those energies through contact with a new, and quickening, fount of interest. But the apparent increase is not really an addition to the original force belonging to the individual. It is only the stoppage of the waste caused by wearisome monotony; and the revival of worn-out energy by fresh and bright mutations of interest. This is the work and worth of all recreations, and varieties of interest. They do not actually increase the amount of original force latent in any individual; but they practically increase that force by stopping all waste through over-weariness, and by making available (through the relaxation of the jaded parts, and the employment of the unjaded parts) the whole amount of individual force latent in each man's complex nature.

When this *law of the limitation of force* in man's nature is applied to religion; its method of operation

[1] "It is not given to the human intellect to expand itself widely in all directions at once, and to be at the same time gigantic and well-proportioned. Whoever becomes pre-eminent . . . does so by devoting himself with intense, and exclusive, enthusiasm to the pursuit of one kind of eminence" (Macaulay's "Essay on Madame D'Arblay").

is clearly manifested. In every man, as we have said, there is a certain fixed amount of force; a fixed, and limited, capacity of absorption; a certain, yet finite, power of taking interest in things. Moreover as the whole of each individual man is compounded of three separate parts—body, soul, and spirit—the amount of each individual's force may be duly distributed among the three parts; thus making an harmonious and well-proportioned man. Or the force may be unevenly distributed—either by being entirely concentrated on one part, and subtracted from the other two; or by being confined to two parts, and wholly taken from one; or else by being distributed among the three parts, but not in just and fair proportions. In any, and all, of these latter instances, the man is inharmoniously developed and disproportioned. If, *e.g.*, none of a man's force (or only a disproportionately small fraction of it) is bestowed on his spiritual part; if his force is wholly, or largely, bestowed on things outside religion, however innocent in themselves those things may be; the result to that man will be either irreligion, or religious doubtfulness. And, indeed, the supreme and most common cause of religious doubt is just this excessive interest in subjects outside religion. For excessive interest in things outside religion necessarily involves, according to the law of the limitation of force, a consequent diminution of the amount of force available for religious interests.

It should, however, be carefully noted that it is not religion alone which suffers in this manner. Every other kind of culture stands on the same foot, in this respect, as the culture of faith. If, *e.g.*, a man

concentrates his attention entirely on his body, it is not his spirit which alone suffers in consequence ; his soul also suffers. A man wholly materialized by bodily appetites ceases to be intellectual ; as well as ceases to be religious. The force which should have been partly distributed to his soul, and partly to his spirit, has been wholly expended on his body : with the result that both soul and spirit are starved into feebleness. Daily experience bears witness to the stedfast operation of this law. To take, first, the most innocent of all illustrations : the illustration of the professional athlete. The professional athlete's chief interest is some form of bodily exercise. Upon bodily exercise he concentrates his whole, or his main, individual force. With what result ? With the result that, as a rule, he is neither a scholar, nor a saint. He expends his whole energy on physical culture ; and in order to gain the utmost power for the development of his body, he subtracts from his soul and his spirit the share of force properly, and proportionately, belonging to them. He exhausts his entire stock of force upon his physical exercises ; so that he has no force left for the exercises of his soul and spirit. Thus over-much bodily exercise is not only hostile to the culture of faith ; it is hostile also to the culture of the mind and of the heart.[1]

With reference to other forms of bodily absorption —over-addiction to drink, or food, or sleep, or any other form of sensuous appetite—the operation of this law is much more painfully manifest. The

[1] Bodily exercise doubtless profiteth : but not unless it is duly co-ordinated with the exercises of soul and spirit.

drunkard, and the glutton (or gourmand), and the sluggard, and the profligate, are not only not religious: they are seldom even intellectual. Occasionally, by reason of their abnormal force, they display, in spite of their bodily excesses, an abnormal manifestation of shrewdness and imagination, yet they are rarely capable of devotion to any kind of strenuous culture. To the culture of faith they are naturally indisposed; because of the irreconcileable antagonism between faith and all bodily excess. Similarly, to any kind of high and hard culture—such as culture of the will, of the affections, of the imagination, of the intellect—they have but little force to give. For their fixed amount of force has been too heavily expended on the body, to leave much force available for culture of any hyperphysical kind.

In like manner both body and spirit have commonly to pay a heavy price for too deep an absorption in soul-culture. The over-intense culture of the soul, *i.e.* of the mind and heart, not only deteriorates the spiritual faculties; it deteriorates also the bodily powers. How seldom, indeed, is a great and profound student a person of much bodily power: or even a person of ordinary health and strength! By expending a disproportionate amount of force upon the functions of the soul; too little force is left to bestow upon the functions of the body. Hence the body of the over-absorbed student is generally feeble, and not uncommonly ailing. It is not, then, the spiritual faculties alone which suffer by undue development of intellect, or any other soul-faculty; the bodily faculties similarly suffer. The same over-absorption

of soul which causes the spirit to waver towards doubt, causes the body also to waver towards disease.

It is, moreover, the operation of this law which plunges so many spiritual persons into intellectual ignorance and physical asceticism. Asceticism is the pillage of the body. Ignorance is the pillage of the mind. The excessive devotee robs his body of the force and attention due to it; in order that he may gain a larger amount of force to bestow on his spirit. For the same reason also he robs his soul of the force due to it. And in multitudes of instances spiritual devotees not only rob their souls of their rightful proportion of mind-force, thus plunging themselves into intellectual ignorance; but they also rob their souls of heart-force, thus plunging themselves into celibacy and virginity. For the philosophical explanation of celibacy and virginity, as distinct from other explanations, is just this subtraction of the force properly belonging to the heart; for the sake of indulging in a disproportionate expenditure of force upon the spirit. Devotees are often ignorant and ascetic, merely because, having interested themselves abnormally in spiritual things, and having exhausted in spiritual purposes an unfair amount of their fixed quantity of individual force, they have not a due and sufficient amount of force left for the culture of their body and their soul.

Thus, I repeat, it is not religion alone which suffers from the absence of right proportion, and the neglect of harmony, in the expenditure of force, on the education, and development, of the composite parts of each complete man. The amount of force in every

man being limited and fixed; excess in any department of man's life involves, by necessity, a defect in some other department. It is impossible, therefore, to bestow an undue amount of energy, or attention, on any single faculty of our threefold nature—whether physical, psychical, or spiritual—without subtracting a proportionate amount of energy or attention from some of the other faculties. Thus when an excessively intellectual person becomes defectively spiritual, he is only an illustration of the same law which renders an excessively physical person defectively intellectual; or an excessively intellectual person defectively physical. It is as natural, and as much in harmony with the laws of human life, that those whose spiritual development is defective should be in religious doubt; as that those whose intellectual development is defective should be in mental ignorance.

The operation of this great, and commanding, law of the limitation of force in each individual, penetrates still more deeply than has yet been indicated, into the constitution and conduct of man. For it operates not only upon each of the three parts of man's nature, in its relation to the other two; but also upon each single part in its relation to its own constituent members. For not only is each individual man composed of three separate parts; but each of these separate parts is itself composed of multiform members and faculties. The body, *e.g.*, is not one member, but many; and each of these many members of the body has its own several office or function. The eye is not the hand; nor the foot the ear. And although each of our bodily members forms an

integral part of a common whole; yet each is distinct in itself, and has its own distinctive office. Similarly with the soul. The soul is not a single and indivisible faculty. Probably, indeed, we do not yet know how great, and diverse, are the faculties of the human soul. For every reflective man is deeply conscious that there is, at present, something wrong and enfeebling in his soul; something which hinders his soul from unfolding its proper glory, and mounting to its proper altitude. Therefore, under our present narrow and debilitated conditions of soul-life; it is impossible to enumerate fully the faculties of the human soul. We know, however, that the soul has faculties of moral reflection, intellectual thought, will, imagination, love; together with other like faculties which are kindred to, or resolvable into, these. Each of these faculties operates through its own psychical organ; just as through its own physical organ each several faculty of the body operates.

We may moreover observe, that the law of the limitation of force in man acts, not merely upon the body as a whole, or upon the soul as a whole; but also upon each member of the body separately, and each organ of the soul separately. For what is more common than that deaf persons should have extraordinary sight, and that blind persons should have extraordinary hearing? Or, in other words, the force which in deaf persons cannot be spent on hearing, is spent in seeing; and the force which in blind persons is subtracted from the perception of sight, is added to the perception of sound. Similarly with the soul. For although our knowledge of the soul is immensely less than our knowledge of

the body; yet, in the soul, we may perceive, at least, indications of the working of the same law. For it is not uncommon that persons of slender will should have strong sentiments; and persons of weak mind should have great powers of love; and persons of boundless imagination should be very limited in reasoning capacity. In all such instances, what takes place appears to be that, an undue proportion of soul-force being exhausted on one single soul-faculty, less soul-force remains for distribution among the other faculties of the soul: and that, instead of the whole amount of soul-force being equally or harmoniously distributed among the various soul-faculties, some of the soul's faculties usurp more than their just and proper share.

The operation of this law will, perhaps, be seen more plainly if we confine our observation of it to an area less than the entire soul of man; and isolate from the rest the two soul-faculties of affection and thought. The force of affection possessed by any single individual (though different in different individuals, yet in all cases) is limited. Now this force of affection may lie dormant, or, through stagnancy and non-use, it may be perverted into various kinds of disaffection. Or the whole force may be concentrated on a single, or only few objects; gaining in intensity what it loses in extensiveness. Or it may be distributed over a wide field of interests; losing in depth what it wins in range. But it is an observation of universal testimony that no man's affections can, at the same time, be both multifarious and concentrated; both wide and deep; both broad-spreading and resistlessly strong. The man of strong affections is

also the man of few affections: when affections are many, they are also commonly shallow. And all because the force of affection in each man being limited, it is a dynamical law that what is added to extent must be subtracted from intensity; and what is lost in breadth is won in depth.

And this law of the limitations of the forces of love, applies, with even greater obviousness, to the forces of thought. In each individual, the capacity for thought is a limited capacity; varying in various persons, yet in each person always limited. By indolence, or neglect of training, much of this force may remain through life undeveloped: or, by a perverted will, it may spend itself upon execrable objects. Or when wholly, and even rightly, used; it may be spread over a large area of interests, or it may be concentrated on a few interests, or even wholly on one interest. But if it is widespread, it is necessarily superficial: by concentration alone can it attain to profundity. Thus, not only upon man's body and man's soul, regarded in their complete entity; but also upon the several organs of which each body and each soul is composed, does the law of the limitation of force available in each individual manifest itself.

Nor is it improbable that this same law of limitation holds sway over the spiritual faculties of man. In our present embodied condition we know even less of the nature of the spirit, than of the soul. The complete development of both soul and spirit is evidently not possible, as every spiritual man is deeply conscious, in our earthly condition of life. For the present, in all things, and most of all in spiritual

things, we must be content to see through a glass darkly.[1] Yet we can, darkly at least, perceive that in spiritual things most men are partial. Some excel in one gift, others in another.[2] Some hold most tenaciously to one revelation ; to others, another revelation is peculiarly clear. It is only when the forces of the spirit are equally distributed among the faculties of the spirit that the spiritual man—the man in Christ—is well-proportioned and harmonious, in his spiritual development.

It is with each individual Christian as, according to St. Paul, it is with the whole body of the Church of Christ. In the Church there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.[3] No member of the Church has all the excellencies of the Spirit. Some have one spiritual excellence ; some another. That is to say, two persons may possess exactly the same amount of spiritual force ; but, in the one, the force may be developed in one direction ; in the other, in another direction. But as the amount of spiritual force in each is limited, and *ex hypothesi*, the same : therefore if each, in addition to his own excellence, were to endeavour to attain also the excellence of the other, the result would be that in reaching after the excellence of the other, he would lose some part of his own excellence. And if each were to attain an equality in the other's excellence, it could only be by forfeiting a proportionate amount of the excellence, which before was peculiarly his own. Hence, concludes St. Paul, let every man be content with his own gift, and not be envious of the gifts of others. For if

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 12. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 28–31.
[3] 1 Cor. xii. 1, *et passim*.

others have what he has not; he has what is lacking in them. And they could not gain his gifts without losing some portion of theirs; nor he gain theirs, without losing his.

Moreover the spiritual force of all men is not only not alike; it is not equal. Not only does spiritual force differ in direction, it differs also in amount. Some have five talents, some two, some one.[1] It is also obviously beyond the ability of many persons to choose the direction in which their force shall be expended. As in the body physical, the eye cannot, by choosing, become the ear; or the foot, the tongue; so also in the body spiritual, the gift of prophesying cannot convert itself into the gift of healing, or the gift of knowledge into the gift of wisdom. But, it is equally obvious, that both in the body physical, and the body spiritual, much can be done to make up for deficiencies, and to rectify disproportions, by wise and diligent culture of defective parts. Even when we are naturally deficient in the best and highest gifts, we can do something, oftentimes a great deal, by earnestly desiring and following after those gifts.[2]

And as it is both with the limitations, and the varieties, of spiritual force among the different members of the whole body of the Church of Christ; so also is it with the limitations and varieties of force within each individual member severally. For although, in the social aspect, each individual is but a fractional member of the entire body; yet, in the personal aspect, each individual is in himself an entire whole. And in the entire whole of each human personality there is but a certain limited quantity of

[1] Matt. xxv. 15. [2] 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

spiritual force. Both the quantity and the quality may differ, and does differ, in different men: but in each individual man the available force is limited "Spread this force over a broad surface, the stream is shallow and languid; narrow the channel, and it becomes a driving torrent. Each may be well at its own time. The mill-race which drives the water-wheel is dispersed in fruitful rivulets over the meadow at its foot."[1] Thus in every department of man's triune nature; body, soul, and spirit; and in all the departments taken together; it is a law that the total amount of available force is not infinite but limited, not illimitable but bounded.

We proceed to observe that this law of the limitation of force in each individual among mankind is also the law most commonly underlying the generation, and the growth, of religious doubt. We are struck, *e.g.*, with the great lack of religious interest in some community or some individual. But that lack of religious interest is generally quite intelligible, if we remember the other absorbing interests which consume the whole force, and attention, of the individual or the community. In great and busy centres of commerce, there is often a conspicuous absence of religious interest. But why? Not because religion is unreal or untrue, but because commercial communities are absorbed, engrossingly absorbed, in making money. All, or most of, the available human force in those communities is exhausted in the pursuit of money: and therefore little, or no, force is available for other objects—not merely objects of religion; but objects of a literary, or artistic, or scientific, character. For

[1] Froude's "Short Studies," i. 180.

when a community is extravagantly absorbed in money-making, there is, in that community, not only a scarcity of interest in religion: there is a striking scarcity of interest also in every other department of higher culture.[1] For it is according to the law of the limitation of human force, that excessive expenditure in any single interest or pursuit—however innocent that pursuit may be in itself—causes a deficiency in the amount of force available for other interests and other pursuits.

It is not, however, the pursuit of money alone which tends to exhaust upon itself a disproportionate amount of the force possessed by any individual. Any other pursuit, too eagerly followed, will produce a similar effect; and will lessen the interest which the pursuer is capable of taking in other matters. If any one is unduly, and abnormally, interested in the pursuit of pleasure or fame; the force expended on that pursuit will unduly, and abnormally, detract from the force which ought properly, and in view of maintaining the just proportion of development, to have been bestowed upon other pursuits. When the law of proportion is observed; none of these pursuits, either of money or pleasure or fame (which latter is often, indeed, only a form of the laudable desire to possess the good esteem of our fellow-men) is at all injurious. On the contrary, the duly proportioned development of every side, and every faculty, of any individual person, is the best method of obtaining the utmost possible amount of power which that person

[1] In such communities money is frequently lavished both upon religion and other forms of noble culture. But lavish gifts of money are by no means identical with deep personal study of the objects to which the money is given.

is capable of producing. It is the excess of absorption in any single pursuit which renders that pursuit injurious to the full and harmonious development of man; both in the richness of his various parts, and in the unity of those parts taken together. When a man is so absorbed in any pursuit as to lessen his power of absorption in other things: then he becomes gradually indifferent to other things. And in religion, indifference is a most deadly species of doubt.

Moreover, as we have seen, the law of the limitation of force operates not only upon man's body, and soul, and spirit, in their inter-relations to each other (causing any excess of force spent upon the body to leave a defect in the force available for the soul and spirit; or any excess spent on the soul to leave deficiencies in body-force and spirit-force; or any excess spent on the spirit to involve indifference to the body and the soul); the law also operates on each constituent part of the body, and the soul, and the spirit severally. Take, *e.g.*, the brain, which is the physical organ of the mind: the mind itself being one of the composite faculties of the soul. Brain-force differs in different persons; both in quality and amount. But in each single person the amount of germinal brain-force is fixed; and fixed absolutely. In most persons, indeed, much of the latent germinal brain-force remains dormant and undeveloped; through lack of education and the want of right culture. But even in persons whose brain-force is most fully developed, that force is found to be a fixed quantity; and incapable of indefinite expansion. This limitation is clearly manifested in the universal

fact that no man can be really strong in every department of thought: and the stronger he is in one department, the weaker he commonly is in the rest. Intense intellectual interest, whole-minded concentration and absorption, in one branch of study, of itself and necessarily, deducts from the interest which might otherwise have been bestowed upon other branches of study. That is to say, the amount of brain-force in each person being limited; it may either be concentrated on one subject or distributed among several. If it is distributed, it is extensive but not intense; if it is concentrated, it is intense but not extensive. The chief point, however, is that this force cannot possibly, in the same person, be both broadly distributed and deeply intensified: and that, by the law of limitation, what it gains in one direction, it is of necessity compelled largely to lose in the other direction.

The mental history of the late Charles Darwin—a history very beautifully and modestly told in some of his own letters[1]—affords an eminent illustration of the working of this law. In his early life Darwin was exceedingly fond of music and poetry. But when his pursuit of Natural History grew intense, and his whole time and force became absorbed in that pursuit, his love both of music and poetry faded away. The culture of these tastes, or faculties, being neglected; and the proportion of force necessary to their vitality and growth being taken from them, and bestowed upon other tastes or faculties; those parts of the brain, by means of which music and poetry are rendered delightful to man, perished in him

[1] Darwin's "Life and Letters," i. pp. 101, *et seq.*

through non-use. Being robbed of their due proportion of living force, by the exhaustion of that force upon other subjects, these tastes decayed. They sank into a condition of atrophy. They died from starvation. Yet, although these tastes were practically dead, the memory of their possession still lingered in Mr. Darwin to the very close of his life. In brooding over their loss, he writes most sweetly and pathetically: "If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature."

And, as with music and poetry, so also with religion. The taste (if we may so speak) for religion died in Darwin through atrophy and lack of culture; just as his taste for music and poetry died. If, "at least once every week," he had made a rule of bestowing some of his force on religion, he would probably never have become an agnostic. In early life Darwin intended to be a clergyman. But when all the force of which he stood possessed was thrown into the pursuit of Natural History; it fared with his religion as it had fared with his poetry and his music. His spiritual faculties decayed through non-use: all his power of attention—the whole dynamic of his nature—was absorbed by another pursuit; and both the health of his body, and the health of his spirit, were alike forfeited. "Formerly," he writes,

"I was led (although I do not think the religious sentiment was ever strongly developed in me) to the firm conviction of the existence of God and of the immortality of the soul. In my Journal I wrote that, whilst standing in the midst of the grandeur of a Brazilian forest, 'it is not possible to give an adequate idea of the higher feelings of wonder, admiration, and devotion which fill and elevate the mind.' I well remember my conviction that there is more in man than the mere breath of his body. But now the grandest scenes would not cause any such convictions and feelings to rise in my mind. It may be truly said that I am like a man who has become colour-blind: and the universal belief by men of the existence of redness makes my present loss of perception of not the least value as evidence. . . . Disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate; but was at last complete. The rate was so slow that I felt no distress." [1]

Probably no account of the growth of doubt, and the development of doubt into non-belief, so faithful and true as this by Darwin, has ever been given to mankind: certainly never with more honest, and transparent humbleness. By his own account of his own loss of faith, Darwin enables us to see clearly, as in a mirror, how it is that great depths of spiritual incapacity are often found in the same person, side by side with great heights of intellectual attainment. It is not because there is any antagonism between knowledge and faith that men of great learning are often men of little faith. It is because, in the eager pursuit of knowledge, such men have neglected the

[1] "Life and Letters," i. pp. 309, *et seq.*

proportionate culture of faith. Whenever great men have devoted themselves to the culture of faith with the same fervour which they have displayed in the pursuit of knowledge: then both their knowledge and their faith alike have been great. But when intellectual absorption has been so intense, and exhausting, as to leave no force available for spiritual development: then great knowledge is bought by the sacrifice of faith. The powers of faith, in all such instances, are atrophied by starvation and non-use.

This process is, indeed, nothing but the reverse of the process by which religious devotees become intellectually ignorant. The intellect of the devotee is atrophied by undue absorption in spiritual interests; just as the spirit of the student is atrophied by undue absorption in intellectual interests. And this result is wrought of necessity by the law of limitation, which renders the undue development of any single part of man's composite nature adverse, and injurious, to the due development of the other parts. When, therefore, we see a man intellectually very learned, yet spiritually very ignorant; we know two things of that man:—first, that he has greatly cultivated his intellect; secondly, that he has greatly neglected his spirit. And the religious doubts to which he is consequently subject—doubts which in these circumstances rarely cause him spiritual distress, any more than an atrophied limb causes physical pain—arise, not from the great cultivation of his intellectual part, but from the great neglect of his spiritual part.

A curious phenomenon, however, is frequently observable in connection with the atrophy of man's

spiritual nature. In cases like that of Mr. Darwin, where the atrophy is unresisted, and the natural disposition is sweetened by humility, no distress is felt at the loss of faith. The process of spiritual decay in Mr. Darwin was so gradual and slow, as to be almost imperceptible and unfelt. Moreover, his disposition being gentle and mild, no resentment was displayed by him towards the old, dead, spiritual feelings; or towards the religion which had been disused and abandoned. It was always with reluctance, and (as he himself expresses it) with the self-distrust of one who has become colour-blind when speaking of colour; that Mr. Darwin, when he had become religion-blind, spoke of religion. But quiescent and unresentful demeanour is by no means universal among men spiritually atrophied, and religiously agnostic. On the contrary, such men are frequently belligerent in their conduct towards Christianity, and most actively hostile.

This, I say, is curious; and not very easy of explanation. It is, of course, a quite common habit of perverts or changelings, whether political or social or religious, to speak with acrid bitterness, or fiery zeal, against the cause which they have abandoned. Such persons usually desire to demonstrate the completeness, and sincerity, of their new opinions by hotly inveighing against their old opinions. And the ardour natural to converts may, in part perhaps, account for the acidulous zeal sometimes displayed against religion by de-spiritualized persons. But this is clearly neither a complete, nor a generous, account of the matter. Persons in whom the spiritual faculties were entirely atrophied, and quite

dead, would be also quite dead to religion. They would have no interest in it; not even an antagonistic interest. Whether it is possible altogether to kill the spiritual faculty is not here the question.[1] But the present point is, that the nearer the faculty approaches the point of death; the less pain is suffered, and the less interest, of any kind, is manifested in religious matters. Those who were quite dead spiritually, would also be quite indifferent to religious matters. They would be as creatures altogether without any spiritual part; and such creatures could obviously not possess any interest whatever in religion.

In this respect, indeed, religious indifference is worse than religious doubt. Doubt is, at least, a symptom of life. They who doubt are not dead. Religious interest is still alive in them. But the indifferent are in less hopeful case. Their spirits have been palsied by non-use, or starved by non-nutrition. As men very sick are weary of life, and past caring for it; so men religiously indifferent are weary of religion, and past caring for it. Painful, even aggressive, doubt is a sign of unfed, and hungry, spiritual vitality. But painless indifference is a sign of spiritual deadness; and is altogether incompatible with spiritual vigour. When the spirit, therefore, has

[1] "That the spiritual faculty was never quite extinct in Mr. Darwin is obvious from the tenor of a conversation which passed between him and the Duke of Argyll. When the Duke said to him: 'It is impossible to look upon such wonders as, *e.g.*, the Fertilization of Orchids without seeing that they are the effect and expression of Mind:' Mr. Darwin looked at the Duke very hard and said: 'Well! that often comes over me with overwhelming force: but at other times,' and he shook his head vaguely, 'it seems to go away'" ("Life and Letters," i. 316).

been deadened into indifference by whatever cause (either by wealth, or ease, or fashionable frivolities, or any other worldly narcotic), its state is much more serious, and unhopeful, than that of multitudes of active, lively doubters. Almost any kind of interest in religion is of better omen than no interest at all.

Still when interest in religion is aggressively hostile, the explanation of such interest is not always obvious. For why should man be adverse to religion; especially to the Christian form of religion? Christianity has been the greatest of all benefactors to mankind. It is the mainspring of progressive civilization, the parent of liberty, the fountain of the noblest humanizing influences, the archetype of the loftiest ideals revealed to mankind. It is strange, therefore, that good men—and many belligerent doubters are deeply good—should manifest an aggressive hostility to the Christian religion. Let us search, then, if haply we may find, the true cause of this hostile, and aggressive, species of doubt.

Perhaps in no instance is the cause single, and detached. It is generally compound; and its various elements are intertwined in inextricable relations to each other. There is, first, the rebound of licence natural to the throwing off of any restraint. There is, next, the recognition of the many features which all religions possess in common; and as some religions are confessedly false, there is the tendency to conclude all religions under the head of superstitions; and, as superstitions, to denounce them all as foes to reason. There is, also, the identification of Christianity with clerical autocracy: and the consequent outpouring of those vials of wrath upon Christianity,

whose discharge should be justly reserved for clerical autocracy. Moreover, theological writers and rhetorical preachers having frequently, and copiously fulminated their anathemas against doubters and disbelievers: it is only human that doubters and disbelievers should treat theologians and preachers with enmity and scorn. Then, too, when doubters perceive that benevolence and good works are wrought by those who doubt, upon a scale as large and lofty as the scale of average believers; they resent the pretensions of a faith which is so frequently barren and inoperative. Besides, it should be noted that as the scientific temper, with its demand for demonstration and exactitude and certainty, rouses a feeling of hostility among commonplace theologians; so the theological temper, with its credulousness and distaste for critical enquiry, arouses a feeling of hostility among commonplace unbelievers. Neither temper is capable of understanding the other; each sees all of the evil, and nothing of the good, in its adversary: hence their irreconcileable hostility. And even among unbelievers who are not commonplace, there often seems to be a kind of amused readiness to create consternation in the camp of Christians by announcing the approach of overwhelming hosts which will annihilate all faith; hosts which, notwithstanding these frequent heraldings, have never yet actually appeared.

All these elements, together with others equally obvious, generally contribute to render doubt aggressively hostile to Christianity. But there is one other element, which, though less obvious, is perhaps more mighty than any, or all, of these, in causing doubt to

be so frequently, and actively, hostile to faith. It is the attempt, and the necessary failure of the attempt, to completely rationalize religion. This attempt, with its sure and correlative failure, is the common, though often unsuspected, root of the strange phenomenon of the bitter, and scornful attacks of doubters upon Christianity. There is very much in both the history and the ideals of Christianity, well calculated to exercise a powerful and attractive influence over all true and good men; but for the opposition of invincible prejudice. Invincible prejudice always steels the heart, and darkens the mind. And as, in the case of the Dominican Inquisitors, invincible prejudice not only rendered the Inquisitors incapable of perceiving the beauty of their victims' lives, but also incited them to destroy those lives:[1] so the invincible prejudice of many modern doubters not only makes them blind to the many beauties of Christianity, but also stimulates them to attempt the overthrow of the religion of Christ.

What, then, is the nature of this invincible prejudice which operates so powerfully in generating an active, and aggressive, dislike among doubters towards the religion of Christ? How is this invincible prejudice produced? In the case of the Dominican Inquisitors it is easy to distinguish the causative elements of their prejudice. They were always hard and mostly honest men. They were convinced that the Albigensian form of faith was false; and not only false, but also destructive of the true Catholic faith. They regarded it as a pernicious poison fraught with eternal ruin to multitudes among men. But most

[1] Cf. Milman's "Latin Christianity," vi. pp. 312, *et seq.*

of all, these Inquisitors were men whose hearts and intellects were largely atrophied. The main force of their nature had been concentrated upon religion; and religion of one particular species. They were, therefore, intensely, but very narrowly, spiritual. Even their spiritual faculties had not been broadly developed. The chief qualities even of their religious life were its intensity and its narrowness. And as for their souls, especially in respect to warmth of heart and breadth of mind, no force remained for their culture. By the exclusive concentration of their whole powers upon an intense and narrow faith, the Inquisitors had starved into destitution the affections of their heart, and the reasonings of their mind—nothing, therefore, was left to control and correct their spiritual prejudice. Hence this prejudice became invincible. And not only invincible, but also angry. For the soul-powers of heart and mind being not wholly dead, but merely atrophied and diseasedly feeble; these soul-powers, though too weak to reason rightly and to love healthily, had yet sufficient strength to reason wrongly, and to pervert tender love into angry hatred.

Now, in the case of aggressive doubters, the growth of angry, and invincible prejudice appears to be exactly similar in kind; though altogether converse in respect to soul and to spirit. What happened long ago to the Inquisitor's soul now happens to the doubter's spirit: and what now happens to the doubter's soul then happened to the Inquisitor's spirit. The main force of the modern doubter's nature is concentrated upon the development of the soul-faculty of reason. Very little force, therefore,

remains for the culture of the spiritual faculty. Thus the spirit of the modern doubter is often atrophied and feeble. But it is not dead. It has sufficient life remaining in it to take some kind of interest in spiritual things. But its interest is generally a sickly kind of interest. Sometimes its sickliness is betrayed by its credulity. "Unbelievers," says Mr. Shorthouse, "are subject to petty superstitions." And it is a common characteristic of modern doubt to manifest an abnormal interest in ghosts, and mahatmas, and table-thumpings; thus attesting its sickliness by its superstitions. The more unhealthy faith becomes, through atrophy of spirit, the more superstitious are its tendencies. A well-nurtured, healthy spirit feeds on spiritual food; a starved, and sickly, spirit craves for spiritualistic stimulants.

But atrophied spirits, though frequently, yet are not always, superstitious. Nor is their invincible prejudice against Christianity always the prejudice of the sickly against the food, and the exercise, which the healthy enjoy. This invincible prejudice against religion is sometimes nothing but the resolute assertion of the sole sovereignty of reason in the kingdom of man.

Every competitor for that sovereignty is treated by many modern doubters as an usurper. Hence the warfare between reason and faith. In no harmoniously developed man is such a warfare possible. Wherever both reason and faith are duly, and fully, developed; they are at peace with each other, and united allies. But the peace of man is inevitably destroyed by the encroachment of any one of his parts upon the force naturally belonging to the

other parts. When the body encroaches on the soul, peace of conscience is destroyed. When the soul encroaches on the spirit; the peace "which passeth all understanding" is disturbed. When the spirit encroaches on the body, the peace of health is forfeited. When the spirit encroaches on the soul, the peace of calm and rational conviction is forfeited. Under any of these conditions of encroachment war in man is unavoidable. In the course of the war the belligerent which is consistently starved, is ultimately defeated and put to silence. In the sensualist, it is conscience which is put to silence; in the devotee, it is reason; in the rationalist, it is faith. But as long as conscience has strength enough left, it will angrily rebel against the usurpations of sense. As long as reason has strength, it will resist the usurpations of faith. And as long as faith has strength, it will resent the encroachments of reason. Internecine war in man is thus inevitable so long as strength enough remains in any part to resist the encroachments made upon it by either, or both, of the other parts.

The aggressive attacks which doubters often make upon religion are an evidence of the waging in themselves of this internecine war. If the spiritual part in them were altogether dead, or even so far atrophied as to be put to silence, the war would cease; and reason would reign quietly, and calmly content in undisputed sovereignty. But so long as the spirit is not wholly quenched and starved, it will resist the unjust encroachments of reason; and reason, being resisted, will rise in angry haughtiness to encroach still further upon the territory of faith,

and to trample yet more despotically under foot the rival which has dared to resist its autocratic dominion.

This seems to be, at least in part, the hidden cause of the strange antagonism of good and honest doubters to the Christian faith. It is the militant effort of the reason to dethrone the spirit, and usurp the sole dominion over man. But there is a still further cause for this antagonism. For while the Christian religion is in no particular an irrational faith; yet in many particulars the Christian religion soars above reason. By the spirit, and the spirit alone, can many of the teachings of Christ be apprehended. Their apprehension is plain and easy enough to the spiritual faculties. But when the spiritual faculty has been neglected and starved; when it has been long robbed of its proper tendance and nutriment; when the soul has been abnormally developed at the sacrifice of the spirit:—then the de-spiritualized man finds himself incapable of apprehending many of the deep, and great, things taught in the Scriptures. Although he applies all the force of his reason to the discernment of these things; yet, like air in the hands, they elude his grasp. For it would be no less impossible to lay hold of a proposition of Euclid, or a syllogism in logic, with the material fingers; than it is to lay hold of spiritual realities by reason alone, without the aid of the spiritual faculty. And when reason finds itself thus baffled, what happens? Instead of confessing that such things are above its powers, and beyond its scope, reason tilts against the things themselves, and dubs them foolishness:—superstitious foolishness.

This invincible prejudice and resentment felt by reason against religion, on account of the transcending spirituality of many religious truths, and the consequent inability of unaided reason to apprehend them, is a powerful incitement to many doubters to make war against the Christian faith. As the Dominican made war against the Albigenses because he was lacking in rational discernment: so the doubter makes war against religion, because he is lacking in spiritual discernment. Doubters are rationalists: *i.e.* they are claimants for the supreme, and sole, sovereignty of reason over man. But the Christian religion, while magnifying reason, yet denies to reason an unrivalled, and monarchic, supremacy. Moreover the Christian religion propounds verities which transcend reason; and are discernible only by the aid of man's spiritual faculties. These verities are regarded by reason as rebellions against its own autocracy. This self-magnifying opinion entertained by reason of its own infallibility, and its own dominion, is (as we have seen) a partial, and perverted view of the threefold nature and complexity of man. But so long as reason holds this disproportioned, and self-glorifying, notion of its own powers and authority; it is only natural for it to shew itself antagonistic to any religion which claims to control its authority, and to share its throne.

Yet, upon consideration, it can scarcely fail to appear quite as irrational, as it is irreligious, to doubt of super-rational things; because super-rational things are not apprehensible by reason. For each part of man's threefold nature has organs of apprehension, and perception; proper, and peculiar, to itself. The

body has bodily organs of perception and apprehension. It lays hold of things with the hand, and sees them with the eye. Similarly, the soul has psychical organs of apprehension; it lays hold of intellectual truths with the reason, and weighs moral truths in the scales of conscience. In like manner, the spirit has its own proper organs, for the apprehension of its own things, and the perception of its own truths. And as we do not seek to see ideas with the bodily eye, or to grasp a syllogism, with the bodily hand: why should we seek to lay hold on Eternal life with the hand of reason, or to perceive God with the eye of the intellect? To sense, belong the things of sense; to reason, the things of reason; and to faith, the things of faith. More than this. As to sense, *e.g.*, it seems senseless to say that a point is that which hath no parts or magnitude, seeing that things without magnitude are imperceptible to sense: so to reason, the thoughts and ways of God, are often imperceptible and unintelligible. But as to reason things imperceptible to sense, are often clear; so to faith, things imperceptible to reason, are often sure. Sense aids the perception of reason, and reason aids the perception of faith; but sense cannot see all that is visible to reason, nor reason all that is visible to faith. The oversight of this fundamental fact is not seldom a source of religious doubt.

Such, then, seem to be the principal causes of religious doubt; and of the strange antagonism sometimes manifested by even good, and honest, doubters against the magnificent revelations of the Christian religion. Some doubts arise from the nature of man's environment: from the material

tendencies constantly bearing upon him from without, from the atmosphere of worldliness which he is perpetually compelled to breathe, from the spirit-crushing and spirit-stifling influences which attend his daily walk and conversation. Other doubts arise from within man: from the blighting and darkening consequences of sin, from vain-glory and exaggerated individualism, from the effects of bitter personal disappointments combined with a feeling of perplexity produced by the universal sorrows of mankind, from the irritation felt at the cruel treatment of honest doubt by artificial orthodoxy, and the smallness of the satisfaction obtained from the ordinary defences of Christian opinions. Other doubts spring from the great confusion existing in the Christian world between the essentials and the non-essentials of the Christian faith, from the unworthiness of the lives of many professing Christians, and from the great negligence displayed by doubters in the cultivation of faith, and from the craving for a species of certainty which would exclude probation. But the most fertile of all causes of doubt is the lack of apprehension by man of the threefold constitution of his nature, and the consequent failure to develop that threefold constitution—body, soul, and spirit—in due proportion and harmonious entirety. If man had as lively an appreciation of his spirit as of his soul, he would probably seek to cultivate the spiritual faculties of faith and reverence and holy awe, with an ardour not less fervid than the ardour now applied to the cultivation of the soul-faculties of reason, and benevolence. But without proper culture—without soil and rain and sun—it is hopeless to expect the powers of the spirit

to strengthen and expand. We might as reasonably throw a grain of wheat on a block of granite and expect it to bring forth fruit; or fling an orchid into an ice-house and expect it to flower — as expect faith to blossom, and bear fruit, without the soil, and the warmth, of its appropriate, and natural environment. The body will not grow without food, nor the soul without education, nor the spirit without culture. And it is the non-observance of this elemental law of man's triune nature—a law which governs each part of that nature severally—which is the most powerful, yet generally the least noticed, cause of religious doubt.[1]

[1] For the further consideration of the Law of the Limitation of Force in Man, cf. Chapter VII.

CHAPTER V.

THE DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING RELIGIOUS DOUBT.

"That which we find in ourselves is (*gradu mutato*) the substance and the life of all our knowledge. Without this latent presence of the 'I am,' all modes of existence in the external world would flit before us as coloured shadows, with no greater depth, root, or fixture, than the image of a rock hath in a gliding stream or the rainbow on a fast-sailing rain-storm. The human mind is the compass in which the laws and actuations of all outward essences are revealed as the dips and declinations. The fact, therefore, that the mind of man in its own primary and constituent forms represents the laws of nature, is a mystery which of itself should suffice to make us religious: for it is a problem of which God is the only solution, the one before all, and of all, and through all."—COLERIDGE'S *Lay Sermons*, p. 84.

THE principal object of this Chapter is the consideration of some of the difficulties attending the path of religious doubt. We saw in the last Chapter that the difficulties attending faith are great; very great. It is, indeed, the great difficulties of faith which, in many instances, engender religious doubt. But what the religious doubter frequently appears to forget is that doubt, no less than faith, is beset with difficulties of its own equally great. Human life, in every department of it, is replete with difficulties. The utmost faith possible to man cannot wholly solve these difficulties. Even the most perfect trust in God does not furnish a full understanding of the ways of God. But if the problems of the universe baffle faith, *à fortiori* do they baffle doubt. If faith

cannot solve them, much less can doubt. To say the least, the doubter is in no better case than the believer with reference to the great problems of the universe.

Without question doubt accomplishes many good things for religion and for man. It defines questions clearly and sharply; it brings difficulties most lucidly to a point; it clears away the mists of prejudice, and submits doctrines to the touchstone of facts. But although doubt is, in these respects, beneficial to religion: yet its benefits are obviously negative rather than positive. Doubt tells man what is not; not what is. Its energy is the energy of criticism, rather than of creation. Doubt points out, with great clearness, the perplexities of the universe and the problems of faith: but it neither solves the problems, nor removes the perplexities. At its best (and this is much) it prepares the way of truth, by destroying the hindrances of falsehood. Like the Baptist in prison —tormented with uncertainty concerning the Messiah, and enquiring, "Art Thou He that should come?"[1] —doubt often affords a fresh opportunity of again repeating the evidences of truth: as the Messiah, in answer to the doubts of the Baptist, once more repeated the proofs of His Messiahship.

Yet while abundantly confessing all the good things which doubt is capable of accomplishing for mankind and religion; the fact remains that doubt solves none of the perplexities of the universe, and heals none of its sores. Doubt bestows no balm on the lacerated heart, and pours no oil into men's bleeding wounds. When life is shipwrecked, and we stand desolate

[1] Matt. xi. 3.

by the grave of all our hopes and all our loves—is any help or light or solace to be obtained from the negations of doubt, or from the questionings of an iconoclastic criticism? At times like these, however weak faith may be to satisfy the longings, and soothe the pains, of sorrowing and suffering humanity; doubt is much weaker still.

And as doubt is powerless either to solve the problems of the universe, or to comfort the weary and the heavy-laden heart; so, moreover, doubt has difficulties both intellectual and moral, proper and peculiar to itself; difficulties which do not lie in the way of faith; difficulties from which the way of faith is entirely free.[1] For consider the nature of the universe in which we live. It is boundless in extent, yet perfect in harmony. The mind of man can neither reach to its limits, nor improve upon its rhythm. The multitude of its splendid suns is without number, the magnitude of its distant stars without measure. Yet this innumerable and immeasurable host of worlds moves with infinitely greater precision than the best disciplined army. Even comets are under perfect control. They blaze for a brief period in the heavens; and then disappear from sight (in some cases) for hundreds of years, wheeling their way through the invisible infinitudes of space. Yet they are not lost. After centuries of absence they reappear as punctually to the reckoned moment, as if their disappearance had been but for a single hour.

And what is true of the infinite in the universe is true also of the infinitesimal. The smallest atom is as perfect and as punctual as the vastest star. The

[1] Cf. my "Sermons for Daily Life," 258–261.

soap-bubble is governed by the same laws which dominate the spheres. The fire on your hearth is in miniature the fire of a sun. In the universe there is no greatest and no least. The least is as perfect as the greatest; the greatest is not better ordered than the least.

Whence, then, I ask, comes this perfection, this punctuality, this incomparable order and precision of the universe—an order compared with which the most harmonious human regulations are chaos; a precision than which the keenest human intelligence cannot even conceive anything more precise? If it be answered that all is the result of law, I further ask, What is law? From whence came law? An effect without a cause is inconceivable. So also is an effect higher than its cause. If, then, the effect of these laws be in accordance with reason and intelligence—nay, if it be among the hardest exercises, and the highest joys, of human reason and intelligence to examine into the nature of these laws, and to delight in their wondrousness—the cause of these laws can be nothing less than Intelligence and Reason. Reasonable action cannot be produced from non-reason, nor intelligible harmony from non-intelligence.[1] The reasonableness, and the intelligibleness, of the laws of the universe compel me to assign the origin of these laws to a reasonable and intelligent Creator.

Moreover, we may ask, did these laws produce man? If not, then whence came man? If they did

[1] A brute, *e.g.*, may perform reasonable actions without itself reasoning: but, in that case, the cause of the brute's action must be referred beyond the brute to the Author of the brute's nature.

produce man, then—seeing that man has reason, will, conscience, and the sense of beauty—these laws must themselves have the sense of beauty, conscience, reason, and will. Or if the laws themselves have not these faculties; then the Lawgiver who gave these laws their character, and put them in operation, must have these faculties. But if the Lawgiver has these faculties, He is not impersonal, He has the attributes of God. Thus whatever may be the difficulties of believing in an Intelligent, Personal Creator; they become as nothing compared with the difficulties of doubting, in the face of the laws of the universe, the existence of such a Creator.

Similarly, when we consider, not the inorganic universe alone, but the vast and well-ordered gradations of organic life; the difficulties of doubting that organic life proceeds from a Living Creator seem to be well-nigh insuperable. For what is the origin of life? This much, at least, we may assuredly reply: "The living must come from the living: for the living cannot come from the dead." Life, indeed, often changes its forms through the transmutations of death; but from no dead thing can any living thing be produced.[1] As the great biologists Sir Richard Owen and the Rev. Dr. Dallinger have conclusively shewn by their experiments, when, in any substance, every germ of life has been absolutely destroyed: from that substance it is impossible to

[1] The life of putrefaction which is generated in dead carcases springs not from death: but from the various forms of life which at all times reside in living creatures, but are kept subjugate by the higher life of the creature: and which are only free to germinate when the departure of the higher life has removed the hindrances to their development.

produce a single monad of life. From the dead, the living cannot spring forth. Hence we are compelled by the existence of organic life to presuppose a Living Creator, as the primal origin of universal life. Without question there are great difficulties attendant on this supposition—difficulties in the apprehension by the reason of a Self-Existent Lord and Giver of life :—but the difficulties of accepting the *à priori* hypothesis of a Living God, the Author and Originator of all manner of life, vanish into nothingness compared with the difficulties of doubting or rejecting that hypothesis.

For what is the alternative, if we doubt or deny this grand hypothesis.[1] We may endeavour to relegate the whole question of the Self-Existence of God, and the origin of things, to the region of the Unknowable. But among the thoughtful, there are but few who can rest content in the contemplation of the awful voids of agnosticism. Multitudes of persons, indeed, are indifferent to these high questionings : but their indifference is not due to thoughtfulness. Rather is it an evidence of unthoughtfulness. Such persons are either by temperament indisposed to deep and hard debate : or they are so absorbingly immersed in some other kind of pursuit as to leave them no power of attention to spiritual verities : or it may be that sin, and self-assertion, have rendered the conviction of God unpleasant to them. But whatever be the reason, the fact is sure that indifference to these high questionings is very rare among

[1] In this part of my argument I speak of the existence of God as a hypothesis : not because I hold the Divine existence to be hypothetical : but in order that I may reason with the doubter on his own assumptions.

deeply thoughtful men. Occasionally, indeed, a philosopher, although pure and humble and unworldly, may grow so wholly intent upon his own particular department of study, as to lose all interest in every other department, even the highest of all departments of study:—the study of the intellectual wonders, and the spiritual mysteries, which envelop the formation of the Universe, and the phenomena of human life. But, as a rule, thoughtful men are compelled, by the noblest necessities of their nature, to think upon God and the origin of the Universe. There is something in man which makes such studies irresistibly attractive to him. And the greater the man, the less is his capacity to put away, and consign to forgetfulness or unknowableness, the obstinate questionings concerning himself, and the Universe, and God.

And when these questionings urge themselves upon the attention of thoughtful men, what alternatives present themselves, as rational accounts of the origin of things, if the hypothesis of a Living, Personal Creator be abandoned? There is, first of all, the alternative of supposing that Blind Chance is the generator of the Universe. But is it more rational to suppose that the beauty and order of the Universe are the chance result of a fortuitous concourse of atoms, than the deliberate product of a beautiful and orderly Mind? If I place, *e.g.*, the most finely finished needle that can be wrought by the skill of man beneath the lens of a powerful microscope; its exquisite smoothness of finish appears rough, and rugged, as the unchiselled rocks which bound the ocean-shore. If then I place beneath the same microscope the sting of a wasp:

lo! the most searching power of the most penetrating lens can detect no flaw in its finish, no rugged breaks in its smoothness. Is it rational to suppose that a haphazard conglomeration of atoms, without the intervention of Mind, could give to the sting of the wasp a beauty of perfection unattainable by the highest efforts of man in finishing the point of the needle? The same tokens of mechanical perfection are manifest everywhere throughout the Universe. The highest engineering triumphs of mankind have never been achieved by violating or going contrary to, but always by imitating and getting into line with, the models supplied by Nature. The arch of a bridge is a copy of the arch of the human foot. The lines of a ship are mainly the lines of the body of a fish or a bird. Some of the chief instruments of the mechanician are imitations of various limbs in the human frame. When telescopes were first invented, a nimbus of divers-coloured light disturbed the clearness of the vision of the astronomer as he gazed through his most finished instrument. And it was not till the lenses of the telescope had been arranged upon a plan similar to the plan of the human eye, that the disturbing nimbus was removed from the astronomer's vision. It is, indeed, sometimes argued that none of these tokens of apparent design in Nature incontrovertibly prove the pre-existence of a Creating Designer. But in any case, I think, it will not be questioned that the omnipresence of order and beauty (and of what in man we should call splendid and incomparable skill) throughout the universe, is more compatible with the supposition of a Personal and Intelligent Creator,

than with the supposition that all this unrivalled beauty, and unparalleled adaptation of means to ends, is the result of mindless and impersonal chance. The loveliness and the exquisite skill of Nature are, perhaps, no proof of the existence of a Personal God: but at any rate they make the belief in an Intelligent Creator more easy, and more rational, than the belief that Blind Chance was the originator of the Universe. As we contemplate the methods and the harmonies of the Material Universe we feel that the difficulties of rational belief in the existence of a Wise and Personal Creator, however great those difficulties may be, are vastly less than the difficulties inevitably besetting either denial or doubt.

Moreover, a rational belief in a Good and Intelligent Creator is not overthrown, although it is troubled, by the intrusion of disorder into the order, and of imperfection into the harmonies, of the Universe. It is, indeed, a great perplexity to find the dark destructions of storm following upon the fruitful calm of sunlight: to find earthquakes and pestilences upheaving and distressing the earth: to find drought and blight withering the crops, and robbing the husbandman of the harvests of his labours. All such phenomena are perplexing to faith. Yet while fully confessing the perplexities of faith: still, on the other hand, when we behold the beauty and the order of Nature, we perceive that the perplexities of doubt are greater than the perplexities of faith. It may be hard to believe, amid the disasters and diseases of the world, that God is: but it is far harder, amid the order and the loveliness of the world, to believe that God is not.

We do not, therefore, ask the doubter to shut his eyes to the difficulties of faith: all we ask is that he should open his eyes to the still greater difficulties of doubt. Besides, it should be remembered that no religion, and least of all the religion of Jesus Christ, represents the earth as now being in the same state of perfection in which it originally came forth from the hands of its Creator. Christianity represents the whole created body of the earth as groaning and travailing in pain[1] together beneath the weight of a primæval curse. And without now entering upon the question of the introduction of this curse to the earth; it is sufficient, for the present argument, to observe that in discussing any single teaching of Christianity, we should bear in mind also the other teachings. Not by one isolated doctrine apart, but by all its doctrines taken together, in the mutual relationships of each to the united whole, can Christianity be truly and righteously judged. When, therefore, amid the beauties and harmonies of the Universe, we perceive the presence of disorder and unloveliness, we should remember that Christianity takes full cognizance of these disorders and miseries. Christianity does not represent the world as perfect, but as wofully and wickedly imperfect. That there is both much perfection and much imperfection even in the material world is manifest to every careful observer. And the problem before the doubter is, to account for this most strange commingling of antagonistic phenomena. No student can, with integrity, blind himself to either set of phenomena. He cannot shut out the imperfections of Nature, and

[1] Rom. viii. 22.

solely beholding its majestic array of perfections, proclaim the indisputable goodness of God. Nor can he, by unduly minimizing its perfections and unduly exaggerating its imperfections, proclaim that there are no marks in the Universe of a Good and Wise Creator's hand. The true and fair-minded student is bound to acknowledge both the perfections, and the imperfections, of the Material Universe: and in seeking to explain them both, each in its conjunction with the other, to ask himself whether any more rational account of this combination of a perfect with an imperfect state of things can be given, than that which is supplied by Christianity: viz. that the perfections are the work of God, and the imperfections the work of an Evil Agent, or influence, striving to mar the loveliness and the order of God's original handiwork. Till some better explanation is found, the Christian explanation holds the field.

And in seeking for any other explanation, all imaginings of what might be are obviously beside the mark. It is clearly the things which are, and not the things which we fondly suppose would have been better, that we are called upon to account for, and to judge. Schemes for the improvement of Creation —for amending the weather and eliminating disappointment—have often been in vogue: but never among practical and far-seeing men. Practical men have a natural distrust of theories on paper. The Utopias which look well in speculation, are not always found to work well in practice. The wisdom of man has hitherto found itself unequal to the task of establishing a polity for even one single district of the earth which has worked without flaw: nay,

which, however promising beforehand, has not afterwards proved to be very full of flaws. How much less, therefore, would man's wisdom be likely to succeed on the scale of a world, when it has hitherto failed on the scale of a parish! But, indeed, it is impossible to treat seriously any suggestions of self-constituted amenders of the Universe. For, first of all, there is not one of these omniscient persons who has ever managed the few and little things of his own personal estate without error or mistake: how then could their omniscience be trusted with the many and great things of the Universe? Indeed the inexpressible vanity of their pretensions fills the mind with invincible distrust of their wisdom. For the truly wise are never boastful of their wisdom.

Moreover all suggestions for the improvement of the methods of the Universe are not only vain: they are impracticable. What the laws of the Universe are, that they are: and man cannot alter them. The parade of wisdom which consists in discussing what might have been, but is not; is a cheap and idle parade. Speculators may bravely announce how they would have regulated the weather, if they had been Creators; or how they would have eliminated disorder and disappointment from the world, if they could have had their way. But seeing that they are not Creators, and cannot have their way with the world, their speculative plans are practically useless. Their plans can never by any possibility be put into operation. Therefore it is quite impossible to judge whether they would work or not: for the test of all things, particularly in the material world, is their aptitude for working themselves out in practice. It

is not until they are tried that their imperfections are discovered. But seeing that these schemes for amending the material universe can never be tried: their practical (as distinct from their theoretical) imperfections are absolutely undiscoverable. It is, therefore, a very cheap reputation for wisdom which rests upon the idle indulgence of imagining schemes that can never be tested: and in boasting of the perfection of plans which the boasters themselves well know can never, by any possibility, have their imperfections disclosed by the trials of practice.

The true student, therefore, knowing both the idleness and vanity of all such pretentious speculations, occupies himself, not with barren imaginings of things which he dreams might be, but with fruitful research into the things which actually are. And in seeking to account for the things which are, he finds that the first alternative to believing in an Intelligent and Personal Creator of the Universe, is to suppose that the Universe, with its majestic order and incomparable loveliness and apparent design and over-teeming life, is the product of Blind Chance; the result of the fortuitous concurrence of dead atoms. And, I ask, does this first alternative—this supposition that all things came into being by the fortuities of fate or the blind concurrences of chance—seem more rational, nay, equally rational, with an intelligent faith in a Living, Personal God?

But there are other alternatives, besides this of blind chance. One of these alternatives is called Nature. But what is Nature? Nature, we are told, is the Order of the World. It is *that*, according to which, the world lives and moves and has its being.

It is the system of laws by which things now consist and will hereafter continue to be. Nature is the innate constitution and inevitable course of things: it is the order, in obedience to which, things come into being, and have their day, and cease to be. It is, moreover, an order to which, in its constancy of routine, man is so uniformly accustomed, that any breach of the constancy, or disturbance in the uniformity, appears to him extraordinary and unaccountable. Man has no word more expressive of violence committed against the true order of things than the word "un-natural." From infancy, man is so closely wedded to the order of the Universe—he depends so entirely upon the unchanging continuity of that order—that it ultimately becomes inconceivable to him that anything should happen different from the usual wont. And if anything is reported as thus happening, he styles it a prodigy, a monstrous abortion; or else a diseased product of a fevered imagination, the result of superstition, the aërial offspring of an uncontrolled enthusiasm. By the habitual contemplation of the beautiful and rigid course of Nature, by calculating in his actions upon the continuance of that course, and finding that it does not fail him; above all, by reason of being encompassed all his lifelong by the present order of things, and never knowing by experience any other order:—man has come to identify himself with Nature. He has himself, unconsciously to himself, become a part of Nature. And, in the end, the result of the habitual contemplation of the constancy of Nature, and the identification of himself with this constancy, not unfrequently is, that Nature becomes a kind of

deity to man: and any disturbance of the order of Nature is regarded as an offence against this deity:—an offence considered by the deifiers to be so impossible that no amount, or quality, of evidence is accounted sufficient to prove that it ever took place.

And, indeed, Nature is magnificent. Its loveliness and majesty are beyond expression. The undeviating methods of its operation, the august uniformity of its laws, the all-penetrating power of its code of action, the wondrous symmetry of its effects, its splendid indifference to all distinctions of greatest and least,—its terrible revenges upon those who disobey its precepts, its glorious rewards to those who are faithful to its ordinances, its ever-expanding revelations to those who patiently study its recesses:—all these things lay prostrate the imagination before the footstool of Nature's throne. Yet if, for a moment, we emancipate ourselves from the sweet shackles of imagination, and calmly search by the light of reason into the very nature of Nature itself; we are confronted with immense difficulties. For what, we ask, is this Nature which seems to rule the world? Is Nature self-originating? Is it personal or impersonal? If personal, how does Nature differ from God? If impersonal, how came Nature to develop from the womb of its own impersonality, such an intensely personal creature as Man? Can the personal spring from the impersonal, and the individual from the non-individualized? Has Nature a Mind and a Will? If it has, then Nature is but another term for God. If it has not, then, I ask, how the mind and will of man have come into being. Can mind come forth from mindlessness; and will from will-lessness?

Nature is, therefore, either nothing but a word synonymous with God; or else it is a word, by the use of which, men seek to hide from view the deep questions which lie beneath the word. Great, indeed, is the power of words! And, perhaps, very few words have exercised such dominant authority over the imagination of mankind; as the words, "Nature," and "the laws of Nature." If these words are meant to be simply descriptive words—words connotative of the origin of things and of the wonderful and majestic phenomena by which man is surrounded—then are they most convenient and acceptable words. But if they profess to be words of explanation—words revealing the causative secrets of the Universe—then they are utterly delusive words. For, as we have seen, they neither reveal anything, nor explain anything. And whatever difficulties beset belief in the Self-Existent, Personal God, whose manifested Will Nature is: yet many times greater are the difficulties besetting the opinion that out of Impersonal Nature, and material forces, there could proceed such phenomena as the beauty and order and skill of the universe: or such a being as man, with his pre-eminently personal attributes of mind, and affection, and will.

Nor if the word "Evolution" be substituted for the word "Nature," are we thereby more successfully freed from the necessity of believing the Personal God to be the Author of the existence of personal man. For here again we are in the region either of efficient causes or of descriptive terms. As a descriptive term, Evolution is eloquent. But as an efficient and explanatory Cause, the theory is disappointingly

dumb. Because Evolution can only evolve what germinally is: it cannot bring into being anything which germinally is not. And when we ask the same questions at the bar of Evolution which we asked at the bar of Nature we are again turned away without a satisfying reply. Evolution does not tell us what it itself is, or whence it came, or whether it is self-existent or not. If Evolution be an unconscious and impersonal energy, we are utterly at a loss to conceive how it came to produce a whole world of consciousness and personality; a universe peopled with thinking, willing, yearning men. To say that a mere blind, unthinking, unintending agency produced humanity, is far more irrational, and incredible, than to say, as Christianity says, that man is the child of an eternal and self-existent Father. As an account of the origin of life, and mind, and will (as Mr. Darwin himself over and over again confesses) Evolution entirely fails. It describes the modification of species; but it does not explain the origin of life.

It is, however, greatly to be regretted, in the sublime interests of truth, that such a tumultuous and unnecessary storm has been raised, both by scientists and theologians, around Mr. Darwin's speculation[1]

[1] I call Mr. Darwin's account of the Origin of Species a "speculation," because as Lord Salisbury said, in his Presidential Address to the British Association at Oxford, August 8, 1894: "We cannot demonstrate the process of Natural Selection in detail: we cannot even, with more or less ease, imagine it. It is purely hypothetical. No man, as far as we know, has ever seen it at work. In the course of our historical period—say 3000 years—this progressive variation has not advanced by a single step perceptible to our eyes." Then, too, as Lord Salisbury observes, biologists demand hundreds of millions of years for the processes of Natural Selection: whereas, according to the geologists, organic life on earth was impossible, owing to the heat of the earth, one hundred millions of years ago.

that each species of things on the earth has not been independently created; and that Natural Selection has been the most important, but not the altogether exclusive, means of their modification.[1] Mr. Darwin himself confesses, with the beautiful modesty so characteristic of him, that the difficulties of his theory are so serious that he "can hardly reflect on them without being in some degree staggered."[2] "Much" (he says) "remains obscure and will long remain obscure, seeing that we are profoundly ignorant in regard to the mutual relations of the many beings which live around us."[3] Of course in all his books Mr. Darwin strives, with phenomenal industry and pertinacity, to clarify the obscurities and to minimize the difficulties of his theory. He has all the ardour of an inventor for his discovery: all the fervid devotion of an enthusiastic devotee for his particular cult. But whether with all his ardour of research and devotion he has, even partially, succeeded in surmounting these difficulties: those who read the sixth, seventh, and eighth Chapters of his "Origin of Species" will be able to judge for themselves.

Take one simple instance of the kind of difficulty ever attending Mr. Darwin's theory: the instance of neuter hive-bees or neuter ants. Mr. Darwin's theory is that the properties and instincts of living creatures are perpetuated by heredity: that the habits of parents are re-born in their offspring, and that, at least in the most conspicuous features of their frame and character, the offspring are a mirrored

[1] Cf. Introduction to "Origin of Species."
[2] "Origin of Species," p. 133. [3] Ibid., pp. 4, 404, etc.

reproduction of their parents. It is upon the foundation of the enormous, and ever-constant, influences of heredity that Mr. Darwin's theory is largely upraised. Nor am I seeking to call in question the fact of these influences. I believe the power of heredity in the earth, and especially in the kingdom of mankind, to be often stupendous, though sometimes very sad. But, I ask, what about the common hive-bee? The busy bee is a neuter insect. It never has any offspring of its own. Its father is the idle drone; which never works or gathers honey for itself. Its mother is the queen-bee who never leaves her hive except once in her lifetime; and that upon the swarming day. With such a father, and such a mother, it is clearly impossible, therefore, that the common hive-bee should owe either its indefatigable industry, or its instinct of gathering honey from flower after flower, to hereditary influences. Neither parent of the common hive-bee is an industrious collector of either honey or wax. Whence, then, come these honey-gathering, wax-collecting, instincts of the hive-bee? or the correlative instincts of the neuter ant?

Mr. Darwin of course does not admit that "such wonderful and well-established facts at once annihilate his theory:" although he modestly confesses that "it will indeed be thought that he has an overweening confidence in the principle of natural selection,"[1] and of the influences of heredity, when he still holds on to his theory, in face of difficulties such as these. And, indeed, for my part, I should have felt a sense of great loss if the difficulties of Mr. Darwin's theory had been so enormous as to compel him to relinquish

[1] "Origin of Species," p. 231.

it: for, whether true or false, his theory bathes the universe in a sea of glory previously unimaginable. As he himself says, his theory "may not be a logical deduction," as it certainly is not of the nature of a mathematical demonstration: yet to "the imagination" (I again quote his own words) "it is far more satisfactory to conceive of the various instincts, and wondrous powers, of the animal kingdom as consequences of one general law leading to the advancement of all organic beings, than as specially created varieties, and specially endowed instincts." [1]

It is not, therefore, in a spirit of antagonism to Mr. Darwin's theory that I make any reference to its difficulties; difficulties which Mr. Darwin himself, with modest and beautiful candour, sufficiently confesses. The truth is that every theory of the origin of the world, and of the genesis of those most curious phenomena of life with which the world over-teems so marvellously, is absolutely encompassed with difficulties. No theory has yet been advanced which does not bristle abundantly with difficulties. The Christian theory of Creation is no exception to this universal rule. And all the difference between the perception—the perception, I say—of the Christian theory and all succeeding scientific theories only amounts to this. The perception of the scientific theory is by an act of guessing: the perception of the Christian theory is by an act of faith.[2] Neither scientist nor theologian was present at the beginning of things. Neither of them was an eye-witness of the creation or the genesis of life. Neither of them can prove by experiment how the wonder was first

[1] "Origin of Species," p. 234. [2] Heb. xi. 3.

accomplished: for neither of them can re-produce the condition of things which existed prior to the conditions of things as they are. In no true sense of actual and ascertained knowledge, therefore, can either theologian, or scientist, really know how things came to be what, and as, they are. All that the scientist can do is to invent, or guess at; or (if he prefers the word) induce a theory from his observation of phenomena; and then test his theory by the touchstone of facts. All that the Christian can do is to accept his theory by an act of faith, upon what he believes to be the authority of a divine revelation:[1] and then, like the scientist, to proceed to test his theory by the application of reason to surrounding phenomena. And what I contend for, and I contend for no more nor yet for less, is the simple truth, that no theory of the origin of things, and of the genesis of life, which excludes a Living, Personal God, is so reasonable, and so comparatively free from difficulties, or so fully fits in with the facts and phenomena by which we are surrounded, or is so good a working hypothesis for every purpose of human life, as the Christian theory which presupposes a Self-Existent Personal Creator. No theologian has ever had greater difficulties to contend with in defending the Christian faith, nor has battled with those difficulties with more resolute will, and more dogged pertinacity; than the difficulties which encompassed Mr. Darwin in propounding his theory of Evolution, and the

[1] The evidences upon which the Christian accepts the authority of his Scriptures is not the question here, and in no way affects the present argument: the argument being that the theories, whether of Science or Scripture, being accepted, upon whatever authority, the present test of their truth is the test of experiment.

determined courage with which he confronted those difficulties.[1]

Before leaving this particular topic, it may perhaps be worth while, for the sake of emphasis, to allude to one other illustration of the kind of difficulty by which any theory of the origin of the world, and the genesis of life, which excludes, or does not acknowledge, the operation of an Intelligent Creator, is continually beset. It is the illustration of the cell-making instinct of the common hive-bee. "He must be a dull man," writes Mr. Darwin, "who can examine the exquisite structure of a comb, so beautifully adapted to its end, without enthusiastic admiration. We hear from mathematicians that bees have practically solved a recondite problem, and have

[1] It is worth noting that Evolution does not of itself, and necessarily (as is often supposed) either exclude or destroy the true teleological argument from design. For (1) Evolution itself is, or at least may be, design: and (2) Evolution deals only with organic nature, not with inorganic nature. But the evidences of design are scarcely less clear, and manifold, in inorganic than in organic nature. Of course there are great distinctions between the nature of human designs in handicraft and divine designs in creation. Human designs have to work upon such limited materials as can be procured: the material at the disposal of an Almighty Creator is *ex hypothesi* illimitable. Human designs are contrived to overcome existing difficulties: but what difficulties can be supposed to have been, in the beginning, in the path of an Omnipotent and Omniscient Creator? Such differences as these doubtless exist between the nature and circumstances of human and divine design. None the less, the evidences of order, and purpose, and will, are so manifest in the universe as almost to compel the supposition of design: and certainly to render the supposition rational. "I feel profoundly convinced," said Lord Kelvin, when President of the British Association, in 1871, "that the argument of design has been greatly too much lost sight of in recent zoological speculations. Overpoweringly strong proofs of intelligent and benevolent design lie around us, and if ever perplexities, whether metaphysical or scientific, turn us away from them for a time, they come back upon us with irresistible force, showing to us, through nature, the influence of a free will and teaching us that all living things depend on One Everlasting Creator and Ruler."

made their cells of the proper shape to hold the greatest possible amount of honey, with the least possible consumption of precious wax in their construction. It has been remarked that a skilful workman with fitting tools and measures, would find it difficult to make cells of wax of the true form, though this is effected by a crowd of bees working in a dark hive." Geometricians of great celebrity have described, in language sufficiently mathematical, the recondite, yet symmetrical, formation of the comb of the hive-bee: and this is what they say. "If a number of equal spheres be described with their centres placed in two parallel layers; with the centre of each sphere at the distance of the radius $\times \sqrt{2}$, or radius $\times$ 1·41421 (or at some lesser distance) from the centres of the six surrounding spheres in the same layer: and at the same distance from the centres of the adjoining spheres in the other and parallel layer: then, if planes of intersection between the several spheres in both layers be formed, there will result a double layer of hexagonal prisms united together by pyramidal bases formed of three rhombs; and the rhombs and the sides of the hexagonal prisms will have every angle identically the same with the best measurements which have been made of the cell of the hive-bee." [1]

Such is the description given by Professor Miller, a celebrated geometer, of the mathematical formation of the typical cell of the common hive-bee: a description of a profoundly intellectual character: a description which none but well-trained mathematicians could possibly understand even in theory; and none

[1] "Origin of Species," pp. 220, 221.

but the most skilful artisans with the finest tools and measures could work out in practice. And yet countless millions of common bees, in the darkness of their crowded hives, are working, with more or less accuracy, upon this recondite and exquisite plan, from morning to night of every summer day! "Granting whatever instincts you please, it seems," writes Mr. Darwin, "at first sight quite inconceivable how they can make all the necessary angles and planes, or even perceive when they are correctly made." Mr. Darwin then proceeds to describe how what he calls 'Nature,' through the agency of 'instinct,' accomplishes all these intricate and beautiful operations. But, I say again that his description is no explanation. And by his description we are only thrown back upon the old questions: What is this 'Nature' which accomplishes such wonderful results? Whence come these 'instincts' which can solve without instruction, and in crowded darkness, recondite mathematical problems; and can work out most finished products: such as test the skill of accomplished workmen and the knowledge of highly cultured mathematicians to delineate, and to achieve, in the studious calmness of reflection, and with the assistant fulness of light? Are 'Nature' and 'Instinct' anything more than descriptive words? If so, what are they, and whence?[1] Is their origin personal or impersonal? And which is the more difficult, or the more reasonable, supposition: the supposition that the methods of Nature and the workings of instinct (which, even in the common hive-bee, are so beautiful and wonderful) are the

[1] "I will not attempt," says Mr. Darwin, "any definition of instinct" ("Origin of Species," p. 205).

handiwork of an Almighty and Intelligent Person: or the supposition that they are the fortuitous products of an impersonal force? Is it not clear that whatever may be the difficulties of believing in God, the difficulties of not believing are greater still?

In the course of expounding his theory, Mr. Darwin says: "Science as yet throws no light on the high problem of the essence or origin of life."[1] "I may premise that I have nothing to do with the origin of the mental powers, any more than I have with that of life itself. I am concerned only with the diversities of instinct and of the other mental faculties in animals of the same class."[2] And again: "I can see no good reason why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of any one."[3] And, indeed, when the theory of evolution is justly understood: when its difficulties are fully acknowledged, and its limitations candidly confessed:—what is there in the theory necessarily adverse to the views which may be legitimately, and are increasingly, adopted by intelligent Christians? I know probably less about biology than Mr. Darwin knew about theology; I cannot, therefore, presume to offer an authentic opinion upon the value of the evidence which has been so industriously accumulated on behalf of the theory of evolution. But if I understand the theory aright, its main contentions are; that, in the beginning, the various forms of life were simple and few; that the more complex organs and instincts have been perfected by the accumulation of innumerable slight variations; that, in the struggle for existence, it is the profitable deviations of structure and

[1] "Origin of Species," p. 421. [2] Ibid., p. 205. [3] Ibid., p. 421.

instinct which are preserved; and that, as a general result of the operation of these laws, there is a marked tendency in every species to improve its character and condition—*i.e.* a tendency to develop and evolve higher special forms from lower special forms.[1]

> "Each moss,
> Each shell, each crawling insect, holds a rank
> Important in the plan of Him Who framed
> This scale of beings: holds a rank, which, lost,
> Would break the chain, and leave behind a gap
> Which Nature's self would rue."

Now what is there, in such a theory as this (if ultimately found to be true, even in a larger degree, than Mr. Darwin has contended), either contrary to the Scriptures or derogatory to the majesty and wisdom of the Creator? Is the ordinary view that each species has been independently created, more redundant with glory to God; than the view that, in the beginning, God created a few, simple forms of life, upon an ascending scale, and conferred upon these original forms the capacity of self-development into other and ever-ascending forms? When I look upon the present countless and complex forms of life teeming on the earth, the more simple the creational basis of this teeming and splendid world can be proved to be; the more grand grows the thought of it:—just as when I look upon an oak built slowly through a thousand years, with its tender leaves past all counting and its solid branches past all bending; I am more deeply impressed with its development from a weak and tiny acorn, than I should be with the separate creation of each several

[1] "Origin of Species," pp. 404, *et seqq*.

fibre in the stalwart trunk, and each several leaf in the multitudinous foliage.

And as the modern theory of evolution seems to me, at least, to supply a conception of the Deity not less, but more, noble than the ancient dogma of innumerous, specific, creations: so also it seems to be quite as much in harmony with the divine apologue of the Creation with which the Book of Genesis opens, as any other scientific theory which has preceded it. In the Holy Scriptures I look not for science, but for religion. The Mosaic account of the Creation is obviously, not a scientific demonstration, but a religious narrative. And to my mind it is one among the many wonders of Mr. Darwin's wonderful theory that, upon a broad and general view, it falls into outline with the religious narrative of Moses. For in both theory and narrative alike, the process of Creation is represented as beginning with the lowest forms of life, and then gradually ascending through the higher forms until it reaches its climax and summit in man. That amid many similitudes between the scientific theory and the religious narrative, there are also many differences—differences such as those surrounding the Fall of Man—it would be disingenuous to deny: but these differences are not rationally sufficient either to prevent religious men from being scientific, or scientific men from being religious.

In the third book of Locke's treatise "Concerning Human Understanding," there is a remarkable passage which well illustrates the religious use which, two centuries ago, philosophy was able to make of the scientific theories of the age:—theories not very

unlike the theory of Mr. Darwin. In the sixth chapter of that book Locke thus writes: "In all the visible corporeal world we see no chasms or gaps. All quite down from us the descent is by easy steps, and a continued series of things that in each remove differ very little one from the other. There are fishes that have wings. There are some birds that are inhabitants of the water, whose blood is cold as fishes, and their flesh is so like in taste that the scrupulous are allowed them on fish days. There are animals so near of kin both to birds and beasts, that they are in the middle between both: amphibious animals link the terrestrial and the aquatic together. Seals live at land and at sea, and porpoises have the warm blood and entrails of a hog, not to mention what is confidently reported of mermaids or sea-men. There are some brutes that seem to have as much knowledge and reason as some that are called men: and the animal and vegetable kingdoms are so nearly joined that if you will take the lowest of the one and the highest of the other, there will scarce be perceived any great difference between them: and so on till we come to the lowest and most inorganical parts of matter, we shall find everywhere that the several species are linked together, and differ but in almost insensible degrees." Thus Locke the philosopher wrote, more than a century before Darwin the naturalist was born. In some respects, the theories of the seventeenth-century philosopher and the nineteenth-century naturalist are similar; though their inferences are dissimilar. For what is Locke's inference from his observation of the continuity of the chain of organisms in the sensible and animal

world below man? His inference is that; if below man there are no chasms and gaps, but only a gradual and continuous descent, till the lowest and most inorganical parts of matter are finally reached;—then it is at least probable that above man there should be an infinite and ever-ascending scale of intelligent creatures, gradually mounting by slow degrees upwards and still upwards, till finally the unsearchable existence of God Himself is reached.

But, as we have already seen[1] (and religiously considered this is the important point to remember), the all-absorbing intensity of Mr. Darwin's naturalistic studies, exclusively upon their material side, gradually starved out of his mind the realization of the existence of the Personal God. And it is this religious blindness caused by the slow atrophy of the spiritual vision; and not any inherent, irreligious tendency in the theories themselves, against which all men who desire to develop harmoniously the threefold constitution of their full nature, need to be vigilantly on their guard. For, owing to the limitation of force in every man, it is impossible to exhaust an undue amount of that force upon any particular effort or study, without subtracting some of the force proportionately due to other efforts and other studies. Mr. Darwin exhausted nearly all his force in the direction of Natural History: in other directions therefore, not excluding that of religion, he had unduly little force left to expend. Thus it was not his theory, but the over-absorption in his theory, which necessarily led to the great loss of his religious perceptions and his religious feelings;—a deadly loss against the wilful

[1] Cf. pp. 160, *et seqq.*

incurrence of which all true and reasonable religion uplifts a solemn, warning, voice.

With regard to the theory of evolution, as indeed with regard to all scientific theories of whatever kind, when once they are proved to be true; it is the duty, and should be the joy, of religion, most warmly to accept and embrace them. The Source of all truth can be none other, if religion be a verity, than God Himself. Religion, therefore, as God's chief representative on earth, should be the first of all the friends to truth of every kind. But when scientific theories draw men away from God, the Fount of man's highest good: when they substitute either blind chance, or remorseless fate, or impersonal nature, in the stead of the All-Wise and All-Guiding Father:—then these theories are both injurious and irrational. They are injurious, because they check and starve man's highest and noblest development: the development of his spiritual nature. They are irrational; because they attribute the beauties and harmonies of the Universe, its well-ordered laws and intelligent processes, to blind and unintelligent force. They are irrational also because they attribute the genesis of the personality of man to some impersonal agency: and this is contrary to reason.

The rejection of Christianity, and the indulgence in doubt, do not lead man to any more reasonable explanation of the origin of life, and the formation of worlds, than does the Christian doctrine of the creative operations of the Self-Existent, Personal God. If the organic universe were resolvable by science into a single protoplasm—some primal monad of germinal existence:—from which it could be demonstrated

that all succeeding forms of life had developed themselves by the process of evolution: still the original protoplasm, or first vital monad, would remain to be accounted for; as also the origin of the wondrous germinal energy from which has slowly emerged the present multiform universe of organic life. The world is here: yea, countless worlds upon countless worlds surround this world on which we live. Whence came these worlds upon worlds? Or to isolate from this inconceivable host of splendid worlds, the little creature man—man! inexpressibly little in relation to the vast infinitudes of space all luminous with thronging stars; yet inexpressibly great considered in relation to himself with all his powers of thought and imagination and emotion and will—whence came, we ask, this creature man, so infinitesimally little yet so infinitely great? And whether is easier, to believe that such a creature was developed into existence by an unintelligent and impersonal force; or that he is the handiwork of an Intelligent and Personal Creator?

Man himself is, indeed, a complete answer to all suppositions of a material origin of the universe. For man is an integral part of the universe. Yet man is a sentient and intellectual being. But what explanation is materialism able to give of the sentient and intellectual faculties of man? Its favourite explanation is the explanation of *force*. According to materialism the senses are forms of physical force; will is nerve-force;[1] love is heart-force; thought is

[1] Upon reflection it must, I think, be admitted that the origin of will—with its inherent personality and infinite diversity—is practically insoluble without postulating the existence of a Personal God.

brain-force; and so on. But we ask, on the assumption that this theory is true, *how* came man to be endowed with the capacity of generating such a variety of forces? A man partakes of food. The food is assimilated by the man's body. In the course of its assimilation, part of it becomes eye and is endowed with visual force: part becomes nerve having will-force: part becomes brain having thought-force and the like. But the teleological question is: how comes the eye to be possessed of the means to generate visual force, and the nerves will-force, and the brain thought-force? The food itself is not possessed of these forces: it can neither see, nor think, nor exercise will. The eye, or the nerve, or the brain, considered of itself merely as an organ, is not possessed of the force. For in many dead men, eye and nerve and brain, are organs absolutely perfect and complete. Yet dead bodies neither see nor feel nor think. Without life, neither man's body nor man's food can generate force. And if life itself be regarded as a form of force: we ask *whence*, in the beginning, came this life-force; and *how* came it to be gifted with capacities of sense, and reason, and will? That man is personal cannot be denied. But how came he to be personal if his origin be impersonal force? To suppose that personal man is the offspring of impersonal force can scarcely be esteemed a theory more rational than the belief that he is the offspring of a Personal God.

It is true that, in his present condition, man cannot see without eyes, or feel without nerves, or think without brain. But this is no proof of the identity of brain with thought, or nerves with feeling, or eyes

with sight; any more than it would be a proof that because a wheel cannot move forward without resistance that, therefore, resistance is forward motion. There is all the difference in the world between an instrument necessary to the working of a faculty and the faculty by which the instrument works. Some men cannot see without spectacles: yet spectacles are not sight. An instrument of music is not music, yet without the instrument the music could not be heard. That man cannot, in his present condition of existence, think without brain is no more proof that brain is thought, than it is proof that because a fish cannot live without water, therefore water is fish.

Existence and the conditions of existence are clearly distinct; as also are faculties and the instruments of faculties. Man's body is in a state of perpetual change and flux; but man's self is constant. The eye, the nerves, the brain of man are never the same two days together; but the sight, the will, the thought continue the same. If the eye, or nerves, or brain grow defective as instruments, as in old age and disease they do, then they cannot do their work, not because the faculties of sight and will and thought have become decrepit, but because of the decrepitude of their instruments. If the harp is broken, the harper cannot make music on its strings, not because the musical faculty in the harper is dead, but because his instrument is imperfect.

All materialistic accounts of the constitution of man fail in distinguishing between a faculty and the organs of a faculty, between life and the conditions of life. But even if it could be shewn that a faculty and its instrument, life and its conditions, were

identical: yet, even then, materialism can give us no clue to the origin of the life and faculties of man. And it is, moreover, beset with all the difficulties attending the supposition that life can spring forth from not-life, and organisms from non-organized substances, and personality from impersonality.

But the difficulties besetting all non-religious theories of the origin and constitution of man do not terminate with the consideration of man as a wondrous physical personality endowed with sentient and intellectual powers. For man is a moral being, not less than a being of sense and reason. Not only so. But the world in which man lives is distinguished by certain moral characteristics, and governed by certain moral laws, which are easily explicable on the hypothesis of the existence of a Moral Governor of the world; but, without this hypothesis, are apparently inexplicable. When, *e.g.*, men believe in the existence of a Moral Governor of the world: it is easy for them to understand why vice, as vice, never prospers; and why virtue, as virtue, never yields unhappiness. But if men doubt the existence of the Moral Governor of the world: how can they either understand, or explain, these things? Of course we often see the virtuous made unhappy by the sorrows of the world and the wrong-doings of others; but never simply because of their own virtue. And we often see the vicious prosper because they are clever, long-headed, venturesome, energetic, industrious: but we never see them prosper solely because they are vicious. And what is more startling still. The prosperity which is allied with iniquity, however clever and industrious the prospering person may be,

is for the most part a very slippery prosperity. It seems almost as if the stability of success, and the endurance of even material possessions, were in some mysterious manner undermined, and destroyed, by allying itself with iniquity. Not only do the pleasures of vice putrefy, and breed poisonous germs of misery: but the triumphs of vice frequently turn into defeats, and the successes of vice generally, in the end, become an abiding, and tormenting failure. But if there be no Moral Governor of the world how can general, and startling, phenomena such as these be reasonably accounted for?

Or to put this great difficulty in another way. How can the doubter account for the fact that the human body is so constituted that unrestrained indulgence invariably engenders disease; and physical self-restraint is essential to the preservation of continuous health? Or how for the fact that impurity and pollution weaken and darken the intellect, while continence and purity both enlarge the intellect and illuminate it:—so that if you have two persons of the same original brain-power, and one leads a continent, and the other an incontinent, life; the intelligence of the continent will wax brighter and stronger than that of the incontinent? Or how for the majestic and awful, yet undeniably historical, fact that no society of persons, or nation of the world, has ever yet been able to establish itself firmly upon foundations of tyranny and licentiousness and fraud? If men doubt the existence of a Moral and Righteous Governor of the universe: how can they account for the existence of these sublime and tremendous laws —for they are laws—which cause personal immorality

to end in personal deterioration, and national iniquity in national decrepitude? To the mind of the believer there is no difficulty in grand, yet awful, phenomena such as these: but how can the doubter, who holds himself in suspense concerning the moral government of the world, explain these phenomena? No effect can exist without some sufficient and corresponding cause. Can the doubter suggest any cause so rational, and so probable, as that of the existence, and the ordering, of a Righteous Governor of the universe?

For the sake of perspicuity, and emphasis, let us put this question in its converse form. How is it then that, as the tendency of vice is always towards failure; so, conversely, the tendency of virtue is always towards prosperity? Virtue is not, indeed, always prosperous: yet unquestionably it always tends that way. In saying this, I am not running back upon the old Jewish belief that the reward of religious obedience is worldly prosperity: prosperity in flocks and herds, in basket and store. Christianity has taught mankind to look not to worldly prosperity, but to spiritual growth, as its recompense for leading a religious life. And whenever Christian teachers represent Christianity as a kind of selfish prudence—a way of making the best of both worlds—they fall far below the true ideals of Christian teaching; they foment the inveterate selfishness of mankind; and they inflict great harm upon the high, spiritual, mission of the Saviour of the world. Yet none the less, and as a matter of actual fact, we find that it is part of the general law, and the moral order, of the universe that virtue should possess, and should

manifest, a clear tendency towards worldly progress and prosperity.

This tendency may be arrested in its visible operation, and for the time be apparently neutralized, by the intervening strength of opposing forces—just as the law of gravitation may be arrested in its operation by the interference of some suspending energy ; as, *e.g.*, when I hold in my hand a book, and the opposing strength of my hand prevents the force of gravitation from making the book to fall. But in neither case is the operation of the law really arrested. For when I hold in my hand a book, the law of gravitation makes itself felt by the sense of weight. And, similarly, when opposing forces hinder virtue from attaining success : the moral law makes itself felt in the sense of injustice. The sense of weight is an evidence of the obstructed force of gravitation : and the sense of injustice an evidence of the obstructed rights of virtue. The law of gravitation in matter is not more universal than the law of virtue in morals. And if the law of gravitation is calculated to convince me that the Maker of the universe is strong ; so the law of virtue is calculated to convince me that the Director of the universe is good. And, in both cases alike, the presence of the law makes it difficult to doubt the existence of the Law-Giver.

But the moral difficulties thus besetting religious doubt do not end here. For if there be no Just Originator and Righteous Director of the universe—if man did not at first spring from, and does not still subsist under, a Will of goodness and truth—how is it that virtue, even when temporarily neutralized in its tendencies towards success, can never be even

partially arrested in its production of felicity? By evil agencies, goodness may be robbed of its natural wages—indeed vice may even occasionally purloin, and appropriate to itself, the temporal rewards naturally belonging to virtue—but there is one result which, by the exercise of its utmost power of perversion, no evil agency can succeed in achieving. No evil agency can ever prevent virtue from producing inward happiness and inward peace. Whatever external crosses the virtuous may be called upon to carry: nothing can deprive them of their crown of internal felicity. The virtuous may be poor, lonely, down-trodden, evil entreated—upon the surface of their lives the billows may swell and the winds beat high—but beneath the surface they are at rest. The ship is visibly tossed about: but the invisible anchors are still and firm. How is this? There must be some strong and sufficient cause to account for the fact that man is so constituted that virtue, in spite of all evil, makes him happy, brings him peace, gives him rest. What, then, is the cause? Whence issues this sublime moral law, according to which the fruits of virtue are felicity and peace: and this as naturally, and certainly, as that the fruit of the vine is grapes, and the fruit of the fig-tree is figs? What other hypothesis renders so reasonable an account of the origin of this august moral law, as the Christian doctrine of the existence, and the sovereignty, of a Good and Righteous Lawgiver?

Again, how is it that when the story of a pure, brave, heroic life is told to men; something within compels them to approve and to admire the story? A man may himself be vicious and evil, yet he has

an internal faculty of recognizing goodness and virtue in others. Not only so. But wherever man recognizes goodness and heroism; he is bound, in spite of his own evil habits and propensities, and by a kind of inward compulsion, to pay the homage of his admiration. Whence comes this universal faculty of recognizing goodness, this inner persuasion that goodness is beautiful, this resistless compulsion to admire the heroisms of righteousness?

What, too, is Conscience?[1] Is Conscience a faculty evolvable from nothingness? The power of Evolution has accomplished wonders in the world. It has slowly developed to perfection organisms and instincts that, at first, existed only in rude germ and embryonic possibility. But it has never created anything absolutely new. It has never brought forth anything out of nothing. It has never even developed anything of which there was no pre-existent germ, or primordial cell. For it is not an originating personality: it is only a word describing a process. Evolution could not, therefore, in the beginning, have created the faculty of Conscience. It is true that among various races, and at different periods, we find the faculty of Conscience in various stages and different degrees of development. But among no race of men, and at no period of history, do we find the faculty entirely absent. If it were not there, at least in embryo, no process of education could either evolve or cultivate it. For education, like invention,

[1] "Conscience is neither reason, religion, nor will: but an experience *sui generis* of the coincidence of the human will with reason and religion. In strictness conscience is neither a sensation nor a sense: but a testifying state" (Coleridge's "Lay Sermons," p. 70).

creates nothing. It brings to light things previously hidden; and quickens into active vigour faculties previously dormant. But the thing invented was there before its invention. The inventor did not create it: he only found it. Similarly a faculty educated, or an instinct evolved, was there, at least in latent germ, before its evolution or education. Education brings out a faculty to the fulness of its strength. But, in essence, it existed before. Education does not originate, it merely develops, a faculty.

Whence then did the primordial essence of the faculty of Conscience originate?[1] Conscience is an inward, universal, monitor which naturally, and by a kind of constitutional necessity, approves the things which are right, and disallows the things which are wrong. Its standards of right and wrong, indeed, are not always the same among all men and in all ages. Conscience, like every other human faculty, is largely influenced by its environment. Public opinion, the circumstances of the time, the stage of civilization, the growth of ideals, the might of conspicuous exemplars:—all such influences tell powerfully upon the monitions of Conscience; causing those monitions to be different at different times, and even at the same time among distant peoples to be occasionally contradictory. Nevertheless, broadly considered, the tendency of conscience is always upward towards the right. Conscience, like reason, may be perverted. Its voice may be stifled. Its

[1] Casuists have written much that is very valuable concerning the growth of conscience: but the question here is not the after-growth, but the primal germ of conscience.

light may be hidden, or even quenched. But, notwithstanding all, as the tendency of reason is ever towards truth; so the tendency of conscience is ever towards rectitude. Conscience is a mysterious and majestic faculty. It overwhelms men with horror after the actual perpetration of some crime, over which they have coolly meditated previously. It rewards them with the blessings of peace when they obey its commands, and follow its light. It punishes them with the scorpions of remorse and terror when they shun its light, or transgress its laws.

Whence came, we ask again, these laws of righteousness according to which Conscience seeks to govern the life of man; and this light of goodness by which Conscience strives to direct man's path? Whence, too, was there derived to Conscience its own innate love of justice, its own persistent approval of integrity? Whence came its indefeasible tendency upwards towards things that are excellent; its indignation against injustice, and its hatred of wrong? Men tell us there are great difficulties in demonstrating the existence of God—and, indeed, according to the Christian view, it is part of our present probation that we should be thus unable to demonstrate with mathematical certainty the fact of the Divine Existence—but when we contemplate the moral principles upon which the world is manifestly governed (principles awarding peace to virtue and disquietude to vice): when we ponder over the sublime mysteries of Conscience, with its majestic admiration of goodness, and its terrific indignation against wrong: do we not almost irresistibly perceive that such beautiful and sublime phenomena desiderate

the existence of God; and by their characteristic features declare God to be Just and Righteous and True? Without, therefore, shutting my eyes to the immense difficulties by which the pains and sorrows and inequalities in the world make hard the way of faith: without at all seeking either to disguise or to minimize these difficulties: and without pretending to furnish any complete or offhand solution of them; yet I confess that, to me at least, both the intellectual and the moral difficulties besetting religious doubt are far more baffling, and far less surmountable, than the difficulties in the way of faith.

But the intellectual difficulties set before Doubt by the beauty and order of the material universe; as well as by the existence of reason and imagination in man: and the moral difficulties springing forth from Conscience and the cognate phenomena of the ethical world, are not the summit of the difficulties which Doubt is called upon to surmount. There are other difficulties of a still more perplexing kind. If there be no God, whence comes to man the mere thought, or very idea, of God? If God be inconceivable, and immortality unbelievable, how comes it to pass that the vast majority of mankind have both believed the one, and conceived of the other? Is it not at least remarkable, and worthy of note, that the highest intelligence of man is capable of conceiving of an Intelligence infinitely higher? And that the most perfect human goodness can conceive of a Goodness unspeakably more perfect? And that although creatures of time, confronted with inevitable death, we both can, and we do, trample death under foot, and triumph in the prospect of eternity?

> "My mind may lose its force, my blood its fire,
> And my frame perish even in conquering pain,
> But there is that within me which shall tire
> Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire."

Whence comes this forward, upward, look of universal man: a look not exclusively belonging to Christians, but possessed by men of every race, and at every epoch? "My soul," said Marcus Aurelius, "is a god in exile." The sense of God is practically an universal sense. The hope of immortality is practically an universal hope. Call it what you will—instinct, intuition, intimation, sense, hope—there it is in man: part of his very nature: an integral element in his constitution. How can the doubter account for this unquenchable desire: this unshakeable conviction? It is a desire which is not diminished by civilization. It is a conviction which expands and strengthens under the influence of intelligent reflection. It is a hope which grows more bright with the growth of goodness. So that it may be affirmed, with no distant approximation to truth (and allowing for the exceptions caused by atrophy), that the nobler and the more intelligent man is, the stronger and the more luminous becomes his persuasion of God and of the future existence. "At every ascent of thought we behold supremer heights, with every growth of power we feel further into the infinite. When we go most beyond ourselves, when at our utmost stretch, we are least lost and possess ourselves most effectively. These supreme moments are high life to the poet, times of exquisite skill to the artist, eras of discovery to the investigator, and to the earnest thinker seasons of the most exquisite delight and the richest, fullest, consciousness."[1]

[1] Reynolds' "Natural History of Immortality," p. 84.

What mean these high aspirations and these unquenchable yearnings? Whence came they? Why is it that, at the moment of his noblest triumphs, man cannot rest satisfied; but continues to long for further struggle, more lofty elevation, deeper insight into the mysteries of all existence? Nothing is more real and enduring than man's hunger for the infinite and his thirst for the illimitable. But if man be but matter, whence comes his wonderful and far-reaching mind? If man be nothing more than flesh and blood, how is it that he is capable of realizing the intangible and conceiving of the eternal? If man be a purposeless and undesigned conglomeration of atoms, whence comes the extraordinary energy of his desire for self-realization, for guessing the purpose of life, and understanding the design of his existence? Whence, too, from merely material sources could there be derived to man the beautiful passion of sympathy, the all-commanding ideal of self-sacrifice? On no hypothesis of materialism can such passions and ideals be completely accounted for. Whatever, therefore, may be the difficulties besetting faith, the difficulties of doubt in accounting for man, with his passion for righteousness, his noble aspirations and his self-sacrificing ideals—are far more bewildering and insurmountable.

Indeed the higher we rise in the scale of human faculties the more perplexing do the difficulties of doubt become. To the doubter (as we have seen), the existence of the body of man, with all its marvellous faculties of movement and sensation and reproduction, is an insoluble problem. More hopelessly insoluble still, by any of the processes of doubt,

are the problems connected with man's mental and moral constitution: problems such as those of reason, of imagination, of will, of conscience, of the desire for progress and peace and righteousness, of the prevalence of high and noble aspirations, of the exceeding beauty and benevolence of moral ideas, and of the capacity for self-denial and the joy of self-sacrifice. But if these mental and moral faculties afford problems altogether insoluble to the doubter; what shall be said of the still higher problems connected with man's spiritual faculties?

By those who do not believe, the existence of the spiritual man, *i.e.* of the man who can discern spiritual things with the same clearness and certitude as the physical man discerns physical things, is altogether inexplicable. Yet it is both useless and unscientific to deny the existence of the spiritual man. For we have just the same kind of evidence—the evidence proper to its own sphere—of the existence of the spiritual man, as of the existence either of the physical or the rational man. How does the physical man know that he exists, and that the physical world around him also exists? Is it not by the testimony of his senses? If man had no senses, he would be incapable of realizing to himself the existence of sensible things. It is through the agency of his own physical nature that each physical man recognizes the existence of the physical world and of other physical men. And if any one should doubt his own physical existence, or the existence of the physical world around him; the scientific deduction from such doubt would be, not that the physical universe did not exist, but either that the doubter's

senses were at fault, or that some transcendental philosophy had robbed his senses of their proper power and authority. Similarly with the rational man and the world of reason. How do we know that they exist? Is it not from the testimony of reason in ourselves, and the reason in others answering to our own reason? No man without reason of his own can understand, and be convinced of, the reason in other men; or of the existence of a whole world of reason. It is by the possession of reason in ourselves that the existence of reason in others is knowable to us; and not only knowable, but actually evident. And if any one doubts the existence of reasonable men, or a universe of reason, our inference is *not* that there is no such thing as a reasonable man or a universe of reason, but that the doubter's own faculty of reason is either temporarily overpowered or constitutionally wanting. So, also, with moral men and the universe of morals. How do we know that they exist? Is it not through the testimony of our own moral nature? And if any one doubts the existence of moral righteousness, the just inference is not that moral righteousness is non-existent: but that the doubter's own moral faculty is defective. No one doubts the existence of a physical world because some men are blind; or of a moral world because some men are evil; or of a rational world because some men are foolish. All such doubtings would be regarded as both unscientific and impracticable. The proof of the existence of a physical world is that seeing men see it; of the moral world that good men perceive it; of the rational world that thinking men are sure of it. For the seeing man, his sight affords

him sufficient evidence of the physical world; for the good man, his conscience affords sufficient evidence of the moral world; and for the thinking man, his reason is proof enough of the existence of the world of thought.

Similarly with the world of spirit. That there are persons who either are indifferent to, or do not discern, the spiritual world is true enough. But it is also equally true that there are persons neither few in number nor deficient in intelligence, by whom the spiritual world is as discernible as either the moral, or the rational, or the physical world. And the difficulty besetting the doubter is the plain fact of this spiritual discernment. It is mere idleness to call this spiritual discernment, superstition. For besides the manifest injustice of dubbing with the title of superstition, the full persuasion of persons who are as intellectual and rational and well-informed as any doubters are: the further question presents itself, "Granting that these things are superstitious, yet whence came they?" How is it that man is capable of being even superstitious? No mere brute is superstitious. Even superstition is an evidence of something. What is it an evidence of? As foolishness is an evidence of reason—for if there were no such thing as reason neither could there be any such thing as foolishness:—so superstition is an evidence, albeit a perverted evidence, of spiritual discernment. For without the spiritual faculty, *i.e.* the sense of the spiritual world, even superstition would be impossible. Therefore as false reasoning is yet an evidence of the reasoning faculty, though in a perverted state: so superstition is an evidence,

though a contorted evidence, of the existence of a spiritual faculty.

Of course the spiritual discernment of A is no proof to B of the existence of the spiritual world, if B be without spiritual discernment. But, on the other hand, the absence of spiritual discernment in B is no proof to A, with his spiritual faculty, that the Spirit-world is non-existent. As reason is necessary to the perception of reasonable things, so spirit is necessary to the perception of spiritual things. And although it is difficult for faith to explain the existence of non-spirituality in the unbeliever ; it is no less difficult for doubt to explain the existence of spirituality in the believer.

When we pass from these general considerations which apply to all races, and all ages, of mankind ; and confine our reflections to the specific sphere of Christianity alone, the difficulties besetting religious doubt appear to grow greater, rather than less. It must, indeed, be allowed that many things have been taught, in the name of Christianity, which are neither rationally nor morally defensible : and doubt has done good service to truth by exposing the falsity of these things. But religion does not stand by itself alone in being thus misrepresented and falsified. Science, no less than religion, has seen its ages of superstition ; yet no man holds true science to be responsible for astrology and alchemy. Why then should true religion be held responsible for the superstitions foisted on it? There has been both false science and false religion. But neither the falsities of science, nor the falsities of religion, are a sound reason for abandoning the pursuit of scientific and religious truth.

In the development of religious truth there must inevitably be, from age to age, new siftings of popular religious opinions, and fresh abandonments of popular religious traditions. And these siftings and abandonments will probably cause much earnest sorrow and many burnings of heart. But when the process of winnowing is complete, and the chaff of empty Christian opinion has been separated from the wheat of ripe Christian truth; then, earnest sorrow will be turned into thankful gladness, and burnings of heart into rejoicings of heart. The foundations of Christianity will, in the end, be all the stronger for being cleared of the loose rubble which has been heaped upon them: and the lamps of Christianity will shine all the brighter, when they have been well trimmed, and freshly replenished with the oil of new knowledge.

It is, moreover, especially noteworthy that the nearer we approach to the very foundations of Christianity, the greater do the difficulties besetting religious doubt become. Religious doubt has found but few difficulties in demolishing many of the ricketty structures which have been raised around the noble temple of Christian truth; but the temple itself does not yet appear to be greatly injured. On the contrary, there appears to be far greater difficulty in attacking the temple, and the foundations on which it is reared, than in defending them. If, *e.g.*, we select only four of these foundations—viz. the Bible, the Christ, the gift to man of the Spirit of God, and the prevailing sense of Final Judgment—it seems much more easy, and more natural, to trust to these foundations and to build on them; than to destroy them and count them for nothing.

(1) For consider, first, the enormous difficulties besetting the path of doubt in reference to the Bible. It is quite true that the Bible is not the only volume of sacred literature possessed by mankind. Other religions besides Judaism and Christianity have their sacred literature. Moreover it enlarges the Christian conception of the Fatherhood of God to learn that the sacred volumes of other religions are not lacking in traces of spiritual purpose and divine revelation. It would, however, draw us too far afield to enumerate the superiorities of the Bible over all other volumes of sacred literature. And for our present purpose it is not necessary to dwell on such a comparison. For, without comparing the Bible with other sacred volumes, it is sufficient to observe that, throughout Christendom at least, the Bible is the most striking phenomenon in all literature ; the most enduring and the most influential fact in the whole universe of letters. We may go further and say, with demonstrable truth, that the greatest of all distinctions between communities and races of men is caused by their having, or not having, the Bible. The possession of the Bible appears to exercise a mightier influence in the development of any people than either blood, or climate, or language, or social traditions, or political institutions, or geographical peculiarities. For no race or community, however favourable its political, physical, and intellectual condition, has enjoyed abiding and unfading prosperity, without the Bible. Without the Bible, power melts away as in Rome : literature and art decay as in Greece : commerce dies as in Phœnicia : all development grows stationary as in China : wealth is idle as in ancient India : climate

and seaboard lose their spell as in Northern Africa. On the other hand (what is even more noteworthy still), no people, however hard its lot or disadvantageous its position, has decayed and died while clinging to the Bible. The Bible is the life and energy of civilization. Even the discoveries of physical science and the progress of commercial enterprise may be partly traced to the influence of the Bible. For neither science nor commerce flourish, to their fullest measure, in any country in which the Bible is either an unknown or a proscribed book. The Bible is the great charter of intellectual freedom. Its entrance dispels intellectual darkness and introduces intellectual light. The Bible creates around itself an atmosphere of liberty and radiance, in which the human mind can freely breathe and see to work.

No philosophy, and no science, has ever been able to achieve for man such benefits as have been achieved by the Bible. It has proved itself by experience the best of all books for the training both of the intellect and the heart. "Nothing," writes Professor Jowett, "that can be said of the greatness or sublimity, or truth, or depth, or tenderness, of many passages in the Bible is too much. . . . As we read there grows upon us the witness of God in the world, anticipating in a rude and primitive age the truth that was to be, shining more and more unto the perfect day in the life of Christ, which again is reflected from different points of view in the teaching of His Apostles. . . . The noblest study of history and antiquity is contained in the Bible: a poetry which is also the highest form of moral teaching. And this history, or poetry, or biography, is distinguished from all classical or

secular writings by the contemplation of man as he appears in the sight of God."[1]

Now without entering into any of the vexed questions concerning the origin of the Bible, the method of its compilation, the dates and authorship of its several books—questions which, in no way, affect the broad fact of the actuality of the Bible, and the spiritual exaltation of its influence—the far more important question remains: How came such a volume as the Bible into existence if man be nothing but a material being, whose existence terminates at death? If the writers of the Bible be mere mortal and material creatures, whence came to them the possibility of conceiving, and realizing, and writing about, things transcendently immaterial? Whence, too, came to them their ever enlarging and ever more clearly opening visions of immortality? If man be merely material, how is it that the writers of the Bible are so distinctively spiritual; and that millions of readers of the Bible feel within themselves a capacity to lay hold of, and respond to, this all-pervading spirituality of Scripture? If man be not a spiritual being, then the problem for the doubter to solve is the origin, and method of invention, of such a spiritual volume as the Bible confessedly is: and the still further problem of the Bible's emancipating and liberalizing tendencies wherever its spirit exercises an influence on the conduct of mankind. In comparison with this problem of the existence and spirituality of the Bible, on any hypothesis either of materialism or religious doubt, all problems concerning the compilation of the Bible, its authorship and

[1] "The Interpretation of Scripture," pp. 51, 73, 96.

editorship, are simple and unimportant. Whatever difficulties faith may have to confront in connection with details in the Bible; they are as nothing in comparison with the fundamental difficulties confronting religious doubt: difficulties connected with the broad facts of the existence and influence and all-pervading spirituality of the Bible.

(2) Similarly with the Life and Character of Jesus Christ as set forth in the Gospel narratives. These narratives are obviously, to an unbiassed student, replete with difficulties and perplexities and discrepancies hard to be understood. And the conventional methods, frequently adopted by orthodox Christians, of harmonizing these discrepancies, and solving these perplexities, and explaining these difficulties, instead of allaying and satisfying doubt, only inflame and irritate the doubter. The defences of faith are apt to turn to its destruction, through lack of candour and reality on the part of the defender. Still when all the difficulties connected with the Gospel narratives have been frankly acknowledged, and full allowance has been made for their accumulated force, yet the broad facts of those narratives remain intact: and the difficulties attending all theories of their mythical origin are immensely greater than the difficulties attending their recognition as genuine history.

Look at Christ, the central Personage of the Gospel narratives, in any aspect you will, and He stands forth confessed the grandest figure ever manifested to mankind. His morality is the most sublime ever enjoined by precept and illustrated by example; His ideals and aims are the most exalted ever set

before the aspirations of humanity. And what is very remarkable and important to observe :—neither His ethical nor His spiritual teachings were in harmony with the age in which He lived. So unlike, so contrary, to His age were the principles both of His morals and His religion that His contemporaries crucified Him for enunciating them. Christ was not only before His age; but above it. More than this. His teachings are not only above and beyond all teachings of His own age and the ages which went before; they are above all the teachings of the ages which have come after Him. How, then, shall we account for the existence and exaltation of these teachings? From the point of view of mere reason, which is the more natural hypothesis :—the hypothesis which regards the Author of these teachings as a mythical personage, and the narratives which relate these teachings as legendary compilations; or the hypothesis which regards Christ as a Divine Man, and the Gospels as historic records of His Life and teachings? So sublime are the teachings, and so unique is the character of Christ that it has been well said: "If Christ be a myth, it requires a God to invent the myth."

And with reference to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ—the Resurrection which is at once both the most difficult problem and the most easy solution of Christianity—how does the case really stand? The story of the Resurrection is, without controversy, a strange and perplexing story. It is a story so entirely different from anything which the world has heard either before or since; that multitudes of earnest, thoughtful, persons shrink from accepting it. I do

not desire now to argue the case for the Resurrection: nor to underrate the difficulties attending the belief in the Resurrection. I merely desire to ask what are the difficulties involved in rejecting the Resurrection of Jesus Christ? What is the alternative lying before those who deny the Resurrection? The alternative is none other than that Christianity, of which the Resurrection is the keystone, is founded on a falsehood; and that Christ and His Apostles are deceivers and untrue. No other alternative is possible. It will not do to say that the Apostles, in the frenzy of enthusiasm, imagined that their Lord had risen. For, apart from the Resurrection, what was there to originate or foment their enthusiasm? Apart from the Resurrection, their Master had proved a failure: His career had terminated, and His pretensions had been unmasked, by the catastrophe of the Cross. And the catastrophe of the Cross, far from inspiring them with enthusiasm, had chilled them with despondency and terror and gloom. To suppose, therefore, that the Resurrection was an illusion of enthusiastic devotees is to overlook the depression and despairing horror which overwhelmed the Apostles at the Cross.

Moreover, the Apostles themselves have completely put out of court such a supposition. They tell us repeatedly that until the Resurrection took place, they were not even expecting it; and that, even after the event, they did not believe it, but rather disbelieved it as an idle tale, when it was first recounted to them. Besides all this. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians (the authenticity of which is by all great scholars allowed) St. Paul, having enumerated a considerable catalogue of the

appearances of the Risen Christ to persons still alive when his Epistle was written: himself proceeds to press home the plain issue, either that the Christ was risen, or that the Apostles were false witnesses.[1]

But the alternative of denying the Resurrection implies something more than charging the Apostles with deliberate perjury. It is an alternative which implies deceitfulness (I say it reverently) on the part of Christ Himself. All the Evangelists tell us that Christ had pledged Himself to His Resurrection.[2] Upon this uncontradicted charge He was arraigned before the Sanhedrin: on this account also Pilate gave command to make the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch. The alternative, therefore, set before us in the New Testament is, either to accept the Resurrection or to accuse the Apostles of perjury, and Christ Himself of deception. And seeing that the Resurrection is the very foundation-stone of Christianity, this alternative involves the amazing contradiction that Christianity—the greatest of all teachers of truth—is itself founded on deception, and built up on a lie. The difficulties attending belief in the Resurrection are confessedly great: but the difficulties attending doubt of the Resurrection are immensely greater. For it is surely more easy to believe that Christ rose from the dead than to believe that His Apostles were false witnesses, and He Himself a deceiver.[3]

(3) But the difficulties attending doubt, in the realm of spiritual things, reach beyond the Bible

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 5–15.
[2] Matt. xvi. 21; Mark x. 34; Luke ix. 22; John ii. 19.
[3] My "Sermons for Daily Life," pp. 304–315.

and the Resurrection of Christ to some of the most common phenomena of ordinary life. How can the doubter account, *e.g.*, for the existence of religious men, and changed careers, and spiritual characters, on any hypothesis so natural, and sufficient, as the Christian hypothesis of the gift to men of the Spirit of God? That religious men do exist: men with aims and purposes of an altogether unearthly and unworldly kind, is a fact as plain and sure as that twice two are four. No one who reads the history of mankind, or studies the character of his contemporaries, can (as we have previously seen) disallow the frequent existence of spiritual and unworldly men in all ages: men in the world, yet not of the world. "There are those," writes Professor Mozley, "who stand out from the crowd; whose criterion of what is valuable, and to be sought after, is different from that of others. They do not press forward for the prizes of this world: they stand apart from the struggle in which common minds are absorbed. But they do this without spiritual pride; they think little of themselves, and much of others.

"Now, when we see one of these characters, it is a question which we ask ourselves, How has the person become possessed of it? Has he caught it from society around him? That cannot be, because it is wholly different from that of the world around him. Has he caught it from the inoculation of crowds and masses, as the mere religious zealot catches his character? That cannot be either, for the type is altogether different from that which masses of men, under enthusiastic impulses, exhibit. There is nothing gregarious in this character; it is

the individual's own; it is not borrowed, it is not a reflection of any fashion or tone of the world outside. It rises up in one person and another person, here and there; but wherever it arises, it reveals itself as an individual phenomenon, not belonging to a class, or made by education. We know the history of the worldly character, we know the history of religious zeal; both of these are borrowed respectively from society and from crowds; they are fully discovered and mapped out; but of this spiritual character, which excites at once our awe and our love—which is no earthly manufacture, and no copy or reflection of an outside pattern—whence does this character come and spring forth?"[1] That this spiritual character has existed in all ages, and still exists in special abundance in the Christian age, is a fact as indubitable as any fact of physical science. It is a fact which follows naturally from, and is fully explained by, a belief in the operation of the Spirit of God, Who dwells within and assimilates to His Own Nature, those who open themselves to His presence, and yield themselves to His obedience. But it is a fact which seems incapable of explanation by those who doubt, or deny, the gift to man of the Spirit of God.

And the fact is still more perplexing, fresh difficulties are superadded to its interpretation, on any hypothesis which excludes the Spirit of God; if we remember that this spiritual character often has its mysterious commencement in middle, or even later, life: when opinions are set, and habits fixed, and character determined, and the course of life with its

[1] "University Sermons," pp. 234–241, *passim*.

objects and aspirations have long been settled upon. By some mysterious influence men are arrested midway in their career; they are turned completely round; they cease to care for the things to which all their life long they have been passionately devoted, they begin to yearn for things about which they have hitherto felt no desire: in the startling phrase of the New Testament, "they are born again," from above.[1] And after this birth from above, all things become new to them. They open their eyes, like an infant delivered from the narrow womb of darkness, upon an entirely new world: a world bathed in light, and inconceivably large. Suddenly the value of all things changes scale. What things were counted gold, become as dross; and things hitherto despised are esteemed as pearls of great price. We read of such a change in the lives of the Apostles when, instead of desiring thrones in a temporal kingdom, their greatest ambition was to suffer for Christ; when, instead of pride in Pharisaic lineage and zeal for the law, even life was not counted dear if so be they might win the anti-Pharisaic Christ, and attain the righteousness which is by faith.

But this phenomenon, this fact, of new births in middle life; complete transformations from the earthly and sensual mind to the spiritual and heavenly mind; is not a phenomenon peculiar to Apostolic times. It is a fact of common occurrence to-day. The drunkard is arrested in his career and turns sober; the selfish become self-sacrificing; the man in darkness is shot through with light; the woman who was a sinner sins no more; those formerly set on gain are now

[1] John iii. 7.

set on godliness; those who minded earthly things, mind earthly things no longer, their affections being set on heaven. Instances of such transformations are neither solitary nor rare; they are many and frequent.

How shall we account for this new-birth in these multitudes of persons? They themselves have their own account to give; and they ascribe their new-birth to the operation of the Spirit of God. In all calmness and sobriety, without boasting or parade, yet with quiet certainty, they tell of their seizure by the Holy Ghost; of their yielding themselves up to His dominion; of their consciousness of His guidance and inspiration.

It is obviously easy enough to profane and simulate this Heavenly Gift,—in all ages men have pretended, for their own purposes, to possess it, when they possessed it not:—it is also difficult to imagine why some persons have the gift, and others have it not: also why persons receive it with so much diversity of degree and manifestation. Yet the simulation of a gift, far from being a proof of its non-existence, is an evidence of the value which those who simulate it believe it to possess; and the difficulties attending the occasional absence, and the frequent diversity of degrees, of the gift of the Spirit of God are not greater than, but very comparable to, the difficulties attending the occasional absence, and the frequent diversity of degrees, of the gift of reason. Why all men have not reason, or reason in the same degree, we do not know: why then should we expect to know why all men have not the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of God in the same degree? The things which are unknowable we are not called upon to account

for, but we may reasonably attempt to account for knowable things. And among knowable things is the existence of spiritual character; of changed careers; of transformations, in the very mid-stream of life, from selfishness and religious indifference to self-sacrifice and religious devotion. And when we attempt to account for this quite common, and most beautiful, fact of human experience, can religious doubt supply any explanation less difficult, and more reasonable, than the Christian explanation of the gift to man of the Spirit of God?

(4) But besides the birth, and development, of this noble and beautiful spiritual character, there exists among mankind another spiritual phenomenon even more general, yet equally difficult for religious doubt to account for: viz. the prevailing sense of Final Judgment. "There is scarce a man in the world," says Bishop Butler, "who has entirely got over all regards, hopes, and fears, concerning God and a future state; and these apprehensions, in the generality, bad as we are, prevail in considerable degrees."[1] Without affirming that these hopes and fears concerning God and a future state are universal; it is impossible to deny that they are general and prevalent in all parts of the world, and among all conditions of men. And that they are not absolutely universal no more weakens the fact of their existence and prevalence; than the non-universality of prudence, or foresight, in the common affairs of daily life, disproves the existence of foresight, or of its great and fruitful use to mankind. Whence, then, does this general apprehension of the impending Judgment of

[1] Butler's "Analogy," part ii. p. 84.

God originate? How can it be accounted for on any theory of the purely physical constitution of man? If man be a wholly material being, how is it that he is able even to conceive of a Judgment after death by an entirely Immaterial God? It is sometimes said that this apprehension is but the result of early education; that the fears of hell and the hopes of heaven are only nursery tales; that they are part of the police regulations of government; that they are the inventions of priests and the stock-in-trade of superstition. But these allegations do not answer the enquiry: they only push it a few stages further back. For, we ask, how came the priests to invent these superstitions, and governments to adopt them, and nurses to hand them on from generation to generation? We neither deny, nor overlook, the abuses, and fantastic excesses, of these apprehensions: yet we ask again, Whence did they at first originate? And being once originated, why have they continued ever since as one of the most powerful instruments in energizing the motives, and directing the conduct, of mankind? A mere, absolute, falsity could not conceivably have had such a history, or wrought such an influence. A lie that is all a lie never lives long, or works mighty results among men; certainly not good results, such as the results flowing from the belief in God's Final Judgment have, for the most part, proved themselves to be.

In every falsity that lives long and rules over men, there must be, at least, these two properties. There must be, first, some element of truth which imparts vitality to the falsehood: some leaven which saves the corruption from developing into death. And,

secondly, there must be in the falsity some element which answers to the conscious capacities, and fundamental constitution, of mankind. Unless a falsity, however false it be, has both these elements in it:—an element of actual truth, and an element of truth which answers to, and satisfies, some part of man's threefold constitution; it is impossible for it to live long, and win a powerful empire, among men. Neither history, nor experience, can furnish a single example of a falsity both provably false as a fact, *i.e.* contrary to actual demonstration; and also provably false as an idea, *i.e.* contrary to the whole constitution of man, which has lasted, and ruled over men, from the dawn of human history until now. Such a falsity is impossible to be conceived, and realized upon sober reflection as true.

With regard, then, to the Final Judgment of God considered as a fact: it is confessedly not a fact which can be demonstrated to those who do not accept the Christian revelation as an absolute proof. But with regard to the Final Judgment of God considered as an idea; it is confessedly an idea which, upon reflection, fits in with, and appears truthful to, the constitution, and the consciousness, of the majority of mankind. This is evident, and proved, from the circumstance that mankind in all its stages, from the rudest and most undeveloped ignorance up to the most refined and enlightened culture, have apprehended the idea, and felt it to be both their noblest inspiration to good and their strongest restraint against evil.

That nurses have represented the idea to children, fantastically; and governments to their subjects,

despotically; and priests to their devotees, superstitiously—are all testimonies not to the falsity, but to the abuses of the idea. Even the frequency of the abuse of the idea is perhaps one among the clearest of all proofs that, down deep below the abuses, there lives and reigns an indestructible truth in the idea: —a truth which fits in with the constitution, and commends itself to the reflective consciousness, of man. Without searching into the origin of the idea, we find that when once the Idea of the Final Judgment is presented to man, there is something in man which lays hold of the Idea, and soberly appropriates it as true, and acts upon it, with a readiness which makes the Idea appear to be part of the intuitive sense of mankind.

Even the notion of immortality, apart from Final Judgment, would be a strange and unnatural notion in man, if man were wholly mortal and material. For how could a being whose existence was bounded by time conceive of eternity: or whose faculties were mere functions of matter conceive of an immaterial state: or whose nature was wholly mortal either hope for, or be in dread of, an unending immortality? It would not be more strange for a stone to walk, or a plant to fly, or an oyster to think, or a brute to pray; than for man to conceive of a continuation of his life after death, if death were indeed the end of life. For the faculties and capacities of all grades, and orders, of things in Nature are suited to, and commensurate with, the several grades and orders of those things. The self-movement of a stone is incommensurate with the nature of a stone. The soarings of flight are unnatural to a plant, the processes of

thought unnatural to an oyster, the adorations of worship unnatural, yea impossible, to a brute. In like manner if man were wholly mortal, the very thought of immortality would be unnatural and impossible to him: if he were wholly material, all notions of spirituality would be incommensurate with the order of his being.

But when we remember that man not only conceives of himself as an immortal, and spiritual being; but also, by a prevailing intuition, feels himself, at least, capable of being held responsible after death for the words and deeds of his mortal life;—the difficulties of doubting the fact of this responsibility appear practically insurmountable. For how otherwise than through the revealed fact of the Judgment—a fact, moreover, which when revealed proves itself in harmony with the spiritual nature of mankind—could the mere idea of impending Judgment have possessed itself either of the hopes or fears of mankind? If man were wholly mortal, and material, how would it be possible for him to appropriate, far less invent, the idea of a Judgment by God after death? Even men's efforts to defy, or deny, or smother the apprehension of this Final Judgment are a witness that the Idea of it is possible to them, and the apprehension of it powerful. Yet on any hypothesis except that of the spiritual faculty in man—the faculty which enables him to see the invisible, and lay hold of the intangible, and apprehend the eternal—how can this idea, this intuitive sense, of God's Final Judgment be accounted for? That difficulties lie in the way of this persuasion of God's Final Judgment must be acknowledged; but that

difficulties, of greater magnitude, lie in the way of doubting it must be acknowledged also.

To sum up the theme of this Chapter. Its object has been simply to shew that, in every department of human life—whether physical, mental, moral, or spiritual—the path of religious doubt is attended with difficulties greater than the path of simple, reasonable, Christian faith. The difficulties of faith have been ungrudgingly acknowledged: especially those difficulties, and they are by far the greatest part of the difficulties besetting Christianity, which have followed from confounding the highly elaborate opinions, and imaginings, and doctrines of men, with the direct and simple teachings of Christ and His Apostles. Yet, when all the difficulties of faith have been frankly acknowledged; do they not seem trifling in comparison with the difficulties attending doubt? In the physical world the manifestations of beauty, and adaptation, and law, are so abundant; in the world of man, the manifestations of tendencies towards reflection, and virtue, and spirituality are so obvious; —that any one who doubts the existence, and authority, of a Wise, and Righteous, and Spiritual Creator of the Universe will find that the world is to him a practically insoluble conundrum. Similarly within the sphere of Revealed Religion. The difficulties attending both the fact, and the methods, of Revelation are confessedly great. But the difficulties of denying, or doubting, the principal messages of the Christian Revelation are greater still. And surely in an age, boasting of its toleration and enlightenment, the time has fully come for faith, on its part, to acknowledge the difficulties felt by doubt,

as a preparation for returning to the simplicity, and the fulness, of Christ; and for doubt, on its part, to acknowledge the difficulties attending the rejection of Religion, with a view to avoiding the consequences of Religious Doubt which, it will be the purpose of the next Chapter to shew, notwithstanding certain benefits, are often injurious to the noblest ideals and best prospects, and highest possibilities, of advancing mankind.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF RELIGIOUS DOUBT.

"Man's life, according to any adequate idea of life in a moral creature, cannot be in the right unless in so far as it bends to the influences of a true faith. The true internal acts of moral man are his thoughts, his yearnings, his aspirations, his sympathies or repulsions. It is the *key* in which the thoughts move that determines the stage of moral advancement. The governing, the predominant element it is which gives the character and tendency to thought: and the governing element depends for its character upon the quality of the ideas deposited in the heart by the quality of the religious faith."—*De Quincey's Works*, vol. xi. pp. 81, 82.

THE subject of Religious Doubt is no mere academic subject or speculation of the Schools. It is a subject of the gravest concern and most practical importance. For Religious Doubt exercises a powerful influence on both character and conduct. It is, indeed, sometimes supposed that the questions mooted by religious doubt are questions of mere dialectics, in the clouds, and altogether disconnected from the acts and facts of real life. But it is by no means certain that any single thought can be hospitably entertained in the mind of man even for an hour, without leaving some impress on the habitation in which it has been a temporary guest; while it is absolutely certain that habits of thought and adopted opinions, even of an apparently speculative kind, are intimately associated with both the moulding of character, and the development of conduct.

For what is opinion? Opinion is a persuasion either of head or heart: or, as is most frequently the case, of head and heart together. The only questions on which opinion *can* be purely intellectual are questions concerning which the affections and will are wholly indifferent: having no sympathy or repulsion, no liking or disliking, either one way or the other. But how very few such questions are! The constitution of man is so complex, and the several parts of his constitution so intimately intertwined—the companionship of the head with the heart is so sensitive and near—that, in the adoption of our opinions, it is probable we are subtilly and powerfully influenced by our affections; even when we are unconscious of the influence, and imagine ourselves to be utterly indifferent.

But whether this be so in reference to all manner of subjects or not; it is certain that the subjects with which religion deals, and with which religious doubt is connected, are not subjects on which any man who thinks at all, can think with indifference of heart. They are subjects such as God, the nature of His Attributes, and the extent of His Sovereign Fatherhood: subjects such as Man, his present imperfect condition, the methods of redeeming and exalting it, the social relationships and moral obligations of man on earth, and his prospects of eternal life beyond the grave. Opinions on these subjects cannot, by the very nature of the case, be opinions dissociated from feeling; purely speculative opinions, altogether inoperative on character and conduct. They are opinions in which the heart is concerned not less than the head; and consequently, being persuasions of affection

as well as reason, they are opinions of immense practical moment in daily life: opinions which, either for evil or good, have deep and far-reaching results.

Religious doubt, therefore, seeing that it comes into close contact with the sources of human conduct, must have practical consequences of considerable import. But these consequences are not of necessity altogether evil. Some are clearly good. And, first, among good consequences I would place the advancement and liberalization of theology. Religious doubt has led to the fresh examination of both the charters and foundations of religion; and, as a result of re-examination, to the abandonment of some old theories concerning its charters, and the adoption of some new theories concerning its foundations. But it by no means follows that the new theories are less loyal to the facts and laws of religion than the old theories. In multitudes of instances "new lights on religion re-double the love and respect which men feel for it." Men do not love the Bible less when they abandon the old theories of its compilation; and adopt new methods of interpreting it. Men do not cease to respect the Church because they no longer hold the Church to be infallible. It is through no lack of loving devotion to the Cross of their Lord, that many modern Christians have reckoned the Incarnation to be, for them at least, the first foundation-doctrine of the Christian Creed: the doctrine which most magnifies, and best interprets, the fact of the Crucifixion. It is not disbelief in the Resurrection which leads men to look kindly on Cremation: nor profanity which deems the Sabbath observances of the Jews not literally binding upon Christians: nor any

undervaluing of the importance of personal salvation which gives emphasis, and prominence, to the social aspects of Christianity. "Criticism even without reverence," says Bishop Westcott, "may lay open mysteries for devout study." Much more may criticism with reverence lead both to the advancement in knowledge of the Christian Church, and the deepening in devotion of the Christian individual.

The second good consequence of religious doubt is the evidence which it supplies of man's capacity for belief. Mr. Darwin tells us that "no animal is self-conscious, if by this term it is implied that he reflects on such points as whence he comes, or whither he will go, or what is life and death, and so forth."[1] But man is marvellously endowed with this capacity of self-consciousness. He can turn his gaze upon himself and behold the mysteries of his complete existence. He can, nay, he cannot but, identify himself with his past; and he can, at least, imagine the far-extending possibilities of his future. He can look both before and behind; and as he looks he can ponder, and reflect. He has the strange power of believing that he will not die at death, that his body is not the whole of himself; and that when his body is dissolved he, himself, will not cease to be. The power of believing these things is a wonderful, and mysterious, power. Yet multitudes of men possess it. And even those who disclaim it, and profess to set it at nought; yet have a vivid interest in its manifestations. Oftentimes they are uncomfortable in their denials, and ill at ease with their doubts. Even when they do not themselves believe, they can

[1] "Descent of Man," p. 83.

put questions about the power of belief in others: questions which clearly betray an acquaintance with the nature of belief. Now no mere animal takes any interest of any kind in these questions, either one way or another. A mere animal neither believes, nor doubts, its immortality and final responsibility to God. These questions are nothing to a mere animal: they are not even questions. But to large numbers of men they are at least questions; and generally questions, at one time or other, of all-absorbing interest. That man can discuss these questions, yea, that he can doubt about the right answer to them, is an evidence of something super-animal in him. They who believe have the witness, in themselves, of *what* that something is; and they who doubt, by their very doubting, prove that they are not as the beasts that perish. Thus the capacity for doubting carries with it, as a consequence, a negative testimony to man's capacity for believing.

Another good consequence of religious doubt is the proof it affords that, according to the Government of God in things divine, religion is intended to be addressed to the reason and the will. The greatness of the liberty and independence of man is, to those who contemplate either the love or the power of God, one of the most astounding phenomena of human life. It seems so natural to presuppose that the power of God would compel man resistlessly towards good and the love of God restrain man resistlessly from evil. Yet, as a matter of experience, we find that man is seldom either resistlessly compelled, or resistlessly restrained. In the consequences of things, indeed, he has no choice; but in the things

themselves his choice is free. He is free to choose, *e.g.*, whether he will thrust his hand into the fire; but he is *not* free to choose whether, after thrusting it in, he will be burned. So, too, the choice between vice and virtue, between ignorance and knowledge, is left free to him; but over the consequences of his choice he has no control.

Similarly with religion. It is the part of true religion, said St. Athanasius,[1] not to compel, but to persuade. Compulsion in religion is anti-religious. It is out of keeping with the manifested ways of God to men. Not authority, but liberty, is revealed, by the very fulness of human freedom, as the Divine method of redeeming mankind. Whenever the Church wields the weapons of coercive authority, the Church forsakes the method of God: and the more generously the Church fosters freedom, the more faithfully does the Church follow in the way of the Divine ordering.

It is freedom which imparts to faith its moral value. If faith were compulsory it would cease to be faith. It is, moreover, the element of intellectual doubtfulness in the things believed which gives to belief its distinctive character of affection and trust. To ask that the deepest truths of religion should be resistlessly demonstrated, is to ask that they should be de-spiritualized. Love, and will, are even more essential to religion than reason: greatly important as reason is. Yet neither love, nor will, find scope in resistless demonstrations, or compulsory convictions. Imagination, too, is dethroned from realms where

[1] Οὐ γὰρ ξίφεσιν, ἢ βέλεσιν, οὐδὲ διὰ στρατιωτῶν ἡ ἀλήθεια καταγγέλλεται, ἀλλὰ πειθοῖ καὶ συμβουλίᾳ.—"Ad Monachos" (ed. Bened.), i. 363.

syllogisms reign supreme. And yet imagination is as necessary to the highest development of man as reason. Indeed without imagination reason is robbed of one of its most powerful allies. Even in physical science, it generally happens that it is the imagination which first perceives a law: leaving reason to verify the law by observation and experiment. Imagination is the inventive, discovering faculty: reason the verifying faculty.

Now although faith is something more than imagination—seeing that imagination is often delusive, and negligent of facts, and careless of laws, and unconnected with historical and rational testimony; whereas faith is the dispeller of illusions, keeps close to facts and laws, and in Christianity has the evidences of both reason and history, besides being a personal relation between the believer and God in countless instances which mere imagination could not be—yet faith greatly nourishes the imagination, which it would be unable to do, if its convictions were iron-bound by resistless evidences and proofs.

The truth is that religion is, from beginning to end, a revolt against every form of tyranny: even when the tyrant is no less noble a sovereign than reason. Religion means the development and exaltation of the whole man—imagination, affection, will, not less than reason. In withdrawing many of its teachings from the exclusive dominion of reason, and in leaving them partially doubtful; religion educes, and strengthens, the whole being of man, far more effectually than any compulsory conviction, through sheer main force of demonstration, could succeed in doing. Liberty is of the essence of love, and liberty

is impossible where no choice is allowed; and choice involves the exercise of will, and the exercise of will is impossible in all-compelling demonstrations. Hence the enormous value, both as a discipline of moral probation, and as an educator of the imagination and affections and will, of the absence of demonstration so often characteristic of religious truth. In Christianity, we see truth wedded to liberty; and liberty strengthened in the search for, and determination of, truth.

Neither from the spread of truth, nor the exercise of liberty, has the Church of Christ any just ground for fear. Indeed in reference both to truth, and liberty, the right course for the Church would seem to be plain and open. In reference to truth, the Church should welcome truth from whatsoever quarter it may make its approach: and should welcome it within her pale, in matters of religion, not less generously than outside her pale, in matters of secular knowledge. And if in its triumphant progress, truth should overthrow long-established errors, and tread underfoot long-cherished opinions; still, for truth's sake, the Church should encourage her children to bear the pain of parting from opinions, however tenderly cherished, when once they are seen to be erroneous. So, too, in reference to liberty. Doubt, and debate, and sharp dissension, are indissolubly connected with mental freedom. As soon as men begin to think, it is impossible that they should always think alike. Intellectual repose may reward submission to authority; but the free search for truth must be conducted through many a bitter disappointment, and many a humiliating retractation, and many

a weary strife.[1] In these retractations and weary struggles religious doubt plays a powerful part. Yet if, through its conflicts, religious doubt wins from the Church the recognition, first, of the necessity of freedom, and then of the painful conditions under which alone candid, and humble, and single-hearted men can fight their way from error to truth, from mental subjugation to mental independence :—the good consequence will be not only a diminution of error and an increase of truth ; but also an extension of liberty and a fuller growth of charity.

One other good consequence of religious doubt is its ultimate strengthening and deepening of the doubter's faith. There are many gradations of religious faith ; ranging from the low degree of unquestioning and unenlightened superstition to the exalted summits of rational and enquiring devotion. And, perhaps, to no man is the rest and peace of settled faith more precious than to him who has endured the stress of arduous conflict. They who have passed through the Slough of Despond are they who most rejoice when they reach the Delectable Mountains. To be in doubt is misery ; but the belief which often follows after doubt is blessedness.

Such, then, are some of the good results of religious doubt. Religious doubt is the thunder which clears the theological air. It is the wind, sometimes wild and rough, which winnows the wheat of truth from the husks of error. It is the fire which burns up the dross of religious superstitions and purifies the gold of religious beliefs. It is the travail which precedes the birth of new perceptions and new knowledge in

[1] Stephen's "Ecclesiastical Biographies," ii. 331.

religion. There is no telling, scarce indeed any imagining, what falsities and tyrannies might have been imposed upon mankind, in the name of religion, but for the rebellions of doubt: rebellions which not infrequently have been the forerunners of new liberty, new charity, aye, of even deeper faith.

But there is another side to this picture. The consequences of religious doubt are by no means always good. Doubt is but a perhaps; and "perhaps" is not a word of inspiration. Doubt is critical, often cynical. And while gratefully acknowledging the benefits of criticism; yet it must be added that a critic is not always a creator. A critic uproots and overthrows, rather than plants and builds. No great work was ever accomplished by mere criticism and negation. It is too much to say with Sir James Stephen that "in the long annals of sceptical philosophy is to be found no single name to which the gratitude of mankind has been yielded, or is justly due;"[1] because as a remover of rubbish, as a destroyer of refuse, doubt is undoubtedly beneficial. Yet, it is certainly true, that unless the destruction is preparatory to re-building, and the removal is the first step in the laying of more solid foundations; if criticism rests contented with criticizing, and doubt never gets beyond the stage of negation, its consequences are detrimental both to the doubter, and to those who are influenced by his doubts.

For doubt is, by its very nature, negative and chilling. Even when great positive evils do not ensue from perpetual doubt; yet the continuous indulgence in doubt starves and dwarfs the soul. It

[1] "Ecclesiastical Biographies, ii. 4.

engenders a feeble and hesitating condition of mind which attempts nothing, and accomplishes nothing. Doubt damps the fires of enthusiasm; clips the wings of soaring ideals; nails lead to the feet of onward progress. A world of doubts would be a dreary, dismal, world. It would be a world of mutilated hopes, and mangled aspirations; a world with cynicism for humour, and prosody for poetry, and analysis for romance, and logic for love.

These cold and melancholy consequences follow from doubt in general; from the doubting disposition; from indulgence in indecision; from the excessive culture of criticism; from the practice of self-anatomy; from habits of double-mindedness and wavering. But in addition to the general consequences resulting from the general disposition, and practice, of doubt; religious doubt brings in its train other consequences peculiar to itself.

(1) The first of these consequences is the lowering of men's conception of themselves. By the conception of self, I do not mean the vain conception of self-importance, but the noble conception of self-origin and self-destiny. The doubter's conception of his own self-importance is sometimes both clear, and strong enough. Many doubters have no doubts on this score. But self-importance and self-reverence are distinct and different things. Self-importance leads to vain pride in self. Self-reverence leads to noble humility, and modest dignity. The humble sense of greatness helps to make men humbly great. And what is still more important, our conceptions of self greatly influence our conduct towards others. Self-love stunts the growth of love for others, while self-

reverence nourishes and enlarges that love: for he who reverences himself will also reverence his fellow-men. The God of self-love is the *ego*, its religion is selfishness. The God of self-reverence is the Maker of mankind; its religion is benevolence.

Now religious doubt plays a powerful part in the formation of men's conceptions of themselves. As faith invests men's origin and destiny with grandeur, so doubt disrobes and belittles them. It is true that men of exceptionally noble build will remain noble notwithstanding all their doubts; but upon ordinary men under ordinary circumstances, low views of their origin and vague misgivings of their destiny, exercise a lowering and deteriorating effect. Men's lives greatly depend on their ideas. Practice rarely rises above the plane of thought. When men doubt the divinity of their origin and their destiny, both the conception and practice of life are apt to fall below the divine standard. Faith claims divinity for man: doubt either disclaims man's divinity or leaves it an open question. It is manifest, therefore, that the scope of a man's thoughts concerning himself, his sweep of view, and the inspirations of his conduct, must be enormously affected in the way of exaltation by faith, and in the way of abasement by doubt.

Even our notions of the brotherhood of men are vastly changed by the fact of our faith, or our unfaith, in the universal Fatherhood of God. True, you may be a philanthropist and a doubter. But your fellow-man is transfigured into a different being for you if, instead of regarding him, as a fellow human animal—earthly and mortal—you regard him as the fellow-child of God, a joint-heir with you in the redemption

of Christ, and a being whose existence, far from closing in death, opens out at death into a new and larger expansion of eternal life. Religious faith illumines and amplifies our conceptions of ourselves and each other. Religious doubt dwarfs and darkens our conceptions both of ourselves and of others quite immeasurably.

(2) A second evil consequence of religious doubt is the absence of the consciousness of divine support in seasons of sorrow, and of divine restraint in circumstances of temptation. The difference in the positions of the believer and the doubter in such seasons and circumstances is altogether incalculable. I do not suggest that the doubter will always yield to temptation and sink under sorrow. I know far otherwise. I know that doubters have been firm against temptation and brave under sorrow. Yet after all, the doubter's position is both more perilous and more lonely than the position of the believer.

It is more lonely. Faith is rich in companionships: the invisible companionships which lighten the lot of affliction, and minister consolations to grief, and cheer the solitude of bereavement.

> "One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists, one only: an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power,
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good."

Indeed to the mind of faith the common notion of both calamities and accidents is an inconceivable notion. By the mind of faith all calamities are conceived as coming by permission of God, Who does

not even permit an evil to be, except as the seed of some future good ; and accidents find no room in the cosmogony of those who believe that not a sparrow falls without their Father. The companionship of these convictions is sweet beyond all earthly sweetness, and strong beyond all human strength, in seasons of sorrow and affliction and loss. And very lonely must that man be whose doubts rob him of the comforting society of these companionships. Without these companionships a man may confront sorrow with the iron countenance of a Stoic ; or he may smother his griefs in Epicurean distractions ;—but one thing he cannot do. He cannot "glory in tribulations." In the furnace he cannot enjoy the emancipating society of the Son of God.

And as the religious doubter is, at heart, lonely in his griefs : so also, in his temptations, is he without help from on high. Man is subject to continuous, trinal temptations. We will not pause to discuss the manifold theories of the origin of temptations ; but the fact of continuous temptations is indisputable. And equally indisputable is the fact that the avenues of temptation are trinal. Temptations come to man through each several part of his trinal nature : his body, his soul, and his spirit. There are the physical temptations of sensual appetite ; the psychic temptations of mind and heart : and the spiritual temptations to spiritual indifference and spiritual insincerity. And when temptations assail any part of man's trinal nature, what succour can doubt supply ? "What motives are so likely to be found sufficient to withhold men from the gratification of lust, revenge, envy, ambition, avarice—or to prevent the existence of these passions

—as religious motives?"[1] Men may, indeed, resist temptations of every sort with the aid of motives of varying degrees of prudence and high-mindedness. They may resist temptations to physical excess by prudential considerations of health, and bodily comfort, and length of days. They may resist temptations to self-will, and intellectual vanity, by the aid of a natural, or an acquired, modesty of disposition. But by reason of their doubt, they are helped against no manner of temptations. Doubt of itself never strengthens man's resistance to evil. When doubters resist evil, they resist through no energy supplied to them by doubt.

It is otherwise with faith. The believer possesses all the moral and prudential resources of the doubter—the desire for personal health, the perception of utility, the promotion of the social weal—but, in addition to these resources, he has the consciousness, and co-operation, of God Himself. The believer feels himself beneath the ever-watching eye of God: he feels himself sustained by the ever-helping hand of God. For him, wickedness is not sin against self and against society only: it is sin also against God. The believer is not left to reason and utility alone: he has auxiliaries also of a purely spiritual kind. For the believer, sins against his body are sins against the Holy Ghost, of which his body is the temple; sins against his mind and heart are sins against the mind and heart of God, of whose heart and mind his own mind and heart are the image and similitude; sins against his spirit are sins against the Spirit of God, of whose Spirit his own spirit is the breath. Thus,

[1] Paley's Works, i. 40.

through whichever avenue of man's trinal nature temptation comes; faith, which is the realization of God, affords strength of its own, strength peculiar to itself: a strength which doubt does not possess, a strength of which doubt is altogether bereft and void.

(3) A third consequence of religious doubt is its tendency to undermine, and destroy, the only known, and tried, basis of morality. For religion is the only basis of morality which, upon any wide scale, has been tried, and found effectual, among men. That numbers of non-religious individuals are moral, in the generally accepted sense of morality,[1] is not deniable: that they sometimes are even highly and nobly moral is fully confessed. But whatever may be the case with individuals; it remains unquestionable that the history of humanity can supply no instance of an entire people, or nation, whose moral code has been exalted unless, either by confession or implication, it was founded on religion.

And, indeed, if the basis of morality be not religion, and the sanctions of morality be not religious sanctions; where are those sanctions, and that basis, to be found? Shall we look to cosmic nature for the origin of morality? "Cosmic nature," writes Professor Huxley, "is no school of virtue—but the head-quarters of the enemy of ethical nature. The cosmos works through the lower nature of man, not for righteousness but against it. The immoral sentiments have been evolved no less than the moral. There is, so far as Evolution is concerned, as much natural sanction for the one as the other. The thief

[1] By "generally accepted sense," I mean, moral towards their fellow-men. But non-religious individuals can hardly be considered as moral towards God.

and the murderer follow nature just as much as the philanthropist. Cosmic Evolution is incompetent of itself to tell us why what we call good is preferable to what we call evil." [1]

And what is true of cosmic nature is true also of the social instincts. Neither in the physical constitution, nor in the social instincts, of man, can we find the basis of morality: at least not of such morality as the Religion of Christ has rendered familiar to us. "To do good in return for evil, to love your enemy, is a height of morality," writes Charles Darwin, "to which it may be doubted whether the social instincts would, by themselves, ever have led us. It is necessary that these instincts, together with sympathy, should have been highly cultivated and extended by the aid of reason, instruction, and the love or fear of God; before any such golden rule would ever be thought of and obeyed." [2] Thus Mr. Darwin testifies that the heights of morality, its golden rules, seem to have been won for man by the aid, together with other agencies, of the love and fear of God.

No doubt other agencies combine, and co-operate, with religion both to develop and enforce the noblest morals among men. Even the physical constitution of man plays a powerful part in the standard, and practice, of his morality. Man's body is not the basis, in the sense of being the prime foundation, of his morality; as is proved by the fact that the fundamental moral differences among men are vastly greater than their fundamental physical differences. Yet that man's body exercises an active influence

[1] Romanes' "Lecture on Evolution and Ethics."
[2] "Descent of Man," p. 113, note.

over the morality of man is obvious and incontestable. In the fifth chapter of "The Data of Ethics," Mr. Herbert Spencer sets forth, with great power and ingenuity, the intimacy between the physical and the moral nature of men. Mr. Spencer's theory is that bodily evolution—the development in delicacy and refinement, in steadiness and consistency, of bodily motions—is a cause of the manifestation, and growth, of the moral progress and refinements of man. But Mr. Spencer appears to make too little allowance for the converse effects of morality upon bodily refinement. That physics and ethics in man are closely related may be regarded as proven: but it can scarcely be considered as proven that physical development is the cause of moral development, or that moral refinement is the sure and certain sequence of bodily refinement.

"We cannot," says Hallam, "from any past experience indulge the pleasing vision of a constant and parallel relation between the moral and intellectual energies, the virtues and the civilization of mankind. Refinement has its evils as well as barbarism: vice changes its form without losing its essence."[1] And if it be true that no close, and constant, relation exists between intellectual and moral development; *à fortiori* is it true that history supplies no evidence to shew that moral refinement is an unfailing result of physical development. In his "History of Rome" Niebuhr tells us that, "not a single instance can be produced of a really savage people which has become civilized of its own accord;"[2] *i.e.* where through the

[1] "History of the Middle Ages," iii. 375.
[2] "History of Rome," i. 63.

process of the natural, and spontaneous, evolution of the body, the moral conceptions have been developed and purified. In physical development, and bodily refinement, I take it that there were many Greeks at Athens better formed and more beautiful than the Apostolic fishermen of Galilee: yet Apostolic morality was greatly in advance of Athenian standards. It was a peculiar element in the many tribulations of St. Paul that his bodily development was imperfect; he had a sore thorn in the flesh. But his bodily imperfections did not produce any corresponding imperfections in his morality. On the contrary, the very imperfections of his body were part of the instrumentality by means of which his singular exaltation of character was produced.

While, therefore, conceding to the full, as Christianity does, the interpenetrating intimacy of relationship between man's physical and moral condition—the necessity, indeed, of pureness of body to pureness of heart, and of the subjugation of the body to the emancipation of the soul—yet neither present experience, nor past history, appears to furnish any adequate proof of the theory of the physical basis of the morals of mankind.

And, indeed, such a theory is not even consistent with itself. For in all communities the general standards, and ideals, of morality are commonly more elevated than those of the individual members of that community. "The social state," says Aristotle, "is, in the order of nature, prior to the family or the individual, for the whole is prior to the part."[1] Similarly, social morals are higher, in conception,

[1] Jowett's "Aristotle's Politics," xv.

than individual morals. There is in every community a general moral consciousness, an ethical *Zeit-Geist*, of which each individual's morality is a part; and the aggregate of the individual moralities are the sum. And the standards of this general consciousness are higher than either the standards, or the practice, of the individual members. The individual members have a physical basis, but the general consciousness, considered as a generality, has no physical basis of its own. And so we arrive at the conclusion that ideals of morality which have no physical basis may be more lofty than ideals which have a physical basis: which is evidently inconsistent with the theory that the basis of morals is physical.

We have seen, too, that the social instincts of men are not sufficient, of themselves, to conceive, and frame, the golden rules of such a morality as is inculcated by the Sermon on the Mount. Whence then are these rules derived to mankind? Is Conscience the fount and source of morality? Conscience is one of the noblest faculties of man; and one of the most powerful. It can, with its magic wand, call back the past. Long after a bad action has been done, Conscience will summon the action, from the hidden recesses of memory, to stand forth in appalling clearness as an actual, present tormentor. Conscience can also predict the future. It is the prophetess, sitting within the inmost shrine of self, uttering predictions of weal or woe as the ultimate issue of our course of conduct. It is the power which makes cowards of the bravest when they do wrong; and heroes of the most timid when battling for the right.

More than this. Conscience sits as a just, and

incorruptible, judge not upon actions and conduct only, but upon motives and intention also. And in morals "the important thing is not what a man does; but what he would do." "The key in which the thoughts habitually move determines the condition of a man as a responsible, moral, agent." Those who contend for a purely physical basis of morality, or refer morality to the operation of social instincts, make morality to consist mainly in conduct and action. But Conscience is a probe that pierces beneath the surface of conduct to the heart of intention; and beneath the body of action to the soul of motive. Conscience cleaves asunder the inward marrow of morality from its outward bones: and is, in this respect, a power nearer to the very life of morals than either the social instincts or the physical constitution of man.

And yet, as we have seen,[1] Conscience is exceedingly various in its requirements among the different races, and ages, and religions of the world. Its diversities of standard are immense. It is obvious, therefore, that Conscience is not, of itself, a fixed and unalterable measure of morals. Saul, the bigoted persecutor, was just as conscientious as Paul, the charitable Apostle: the difference being that a new light, to which the conscience of Saul was a stranger, had penetrated and illuminated the conscience of Paul. This light came from without—an internal irradiation from an external orb—and Paul's conscience was able to see the light, to receive the illumination, to follow in the lustrous trail of the heavenly radiance. But Saul's conscience, left to itself,

[1] Cf. pp. 215–218.

would never have been self-evolved into the conscience of Paul. For Conscience is not a star of itself, nor a light; it is more like unto the faculty which perceives the light, the power of vision to behold the heavenly star.

What, indeed, the eye is to the physical, and reason to the intellectual, part of man: something like *that* Conscience is to man's moral part. The eye cannot see without the aid of light from without; and the reason cannot think, or thinks but feebly and lamely, without the help of ideas furnished from without: so the Conscience, left to itself, and without the help of external standards and external lights, makes but poor progress in morality. The Conscience of man needs training, and instruction, and enlightenment, in order to ensure its growth in beauty and power. But, although the Conscience cannot train itself, yet it is capable of being trained; although it cannot instruct and enlighten itself, it is capable of receiving instruction and enlightenment. When beautiful ideals are set before Conscience, it can appreciate them. When lofty heights are unfolded to Conscience, it can set itself to climb towards their summits. When noble motives, and pure conceptions, and great aims, and generous aspirations are presented to Conscience; it can accept them, and assimilate them, and make them its own. It is also capable of shaking its possessor with black dread, and stimulating him with bright hope. It can produce the most miserable disquietude when its monitions are neglected, and the most tranquil peace when they are obeyed.

Conscience is, therefore, one of the most powerful of all instruments in promoting the moral progress,

and elevation, of mankind. Yet it is only an instrument; and an instrument which requires, for its benignant operations, the help of external standards of righteousness, external sanctions of dread, external illuminations of hope. And it is one of the functions of religion to supply to Conscience these external aids. Religion reveals to Conscience new hopes, new fears, new measures of righteousness. It sets on the brow of Conscience a new awe; it shines into the bosom of Conscience with a new light; it inflames the altar of Conscience with a new fire.

True, not even the standards of religion are the same for all people and in all ages. Religion is progressive. Its light is not poured upon men all at once in full blinding power. Religion, like the day, has its twilight, its dawn, its noon. Religion starts not forth into life a full-grown plant. It has its seed, its blade, its ear, its full corn in the ear. The messages of God are given to man, in slowly ascending grades of ever-mounting revelation, as man is able to bear their light, and follow their guidance.[1] But, the point to notice is, that the contemporary standards of religion are always higher than those of Conscience; and it is by the aid of religion, by reason of the fact that religion is ever beckoning Conscience upward, that Conscience is incited to move forward and climb upward.

It is thus that religion supplies to Conscience not only a basis of morality; but also moral sanctions, moral standards, moral ideals. And it is thus also that when religious doubt undermines the foundations of religion, it undermines also the foundations of

[1] John xvi. 12; 1 Cor. iii. 2.

morality. Whatever may be the case with a few philosophers, and isolated persons, yet the testimony of history and experience is so unanimous in the matter that it appears at least probable (probable in the degree which renders neglect perilous) that man is so constituted that he cannot dull his religious sense without dulling his moral sense; and that it is by means of religious enlightenment that moral progress is most surely, and speedily, attained. "When belief waxes uncertain, practice becomes unsound. A man who will do faithfully, needs to believe firmly."[1]

A similar course of reasoning applies to the utilitarian theory of morals. To seek to develop and attain the greatest happiness of the greatest number is a most lofty aim: it is the aim of Christianity itself. But notions of happiness, like standards of conscience, greatly vary at different eras and among different peoples. Among a people in a rudimentary stage of civilization the notion of happiness is a low notion: the notion of delight in idleness, in self-indulgence, in voluptuousness, in cruel victory over a troublesome foe. Such a notion appears to advanced civilization altogether immoral. The greater the happiness, therefore, of an uncivilized people; the greater is their immorality from the point of sight of advanced civilization. Mere happiness, without high ideals of happiness, is thus no safer ground on which to build systems of morality than untrained and unenlightened Conscience. The work of revelation is both to illumine Conscience and exalt the notion of happiness—in Christianity the notion is so exalted

[1] Carlyle's "Hero as Priest."

as to be the exact reverse of the uncivilized notion, self-sacrifice taking the place of self-indulgence in the conception of joy—and when so illumined and exalted, both the light of conscience and the desire for happiness, are vast and powerful aids in the production of morality. But without the guidance and inspiration of revealed standards neither conscience nor happiness is a sure basis for morals.

Before quitting the consideration of this third consequence of religious doubt—viz. its tendency to weaken and sap the foundations of morality—I may observe, in reference to the morality of non-Christians in Christian lands, that unconsciously perhaps to themselves, yet none the less certainly, the non-Christians of Christendom are affected by their moral environment. They dwell in Christian lands, they breathe Christian air, they see through the medium of Christian light, they are the inheritors of Christian ideals and Christian aspirations. Many of them also are the children of Christian parents: the nurslings from Christian homes. All these influences tell through the agencies of memory, and surrounding, and social instinct. And, until non-Christians have entirely cast off all these influences; and have dwelt wholly among non-Christian peoples in non-Christian lands, and moreover have thus continued to dwell for several generations; it is not possible to predicate what form, and measure, their non-Christian morality would take.

(4) But to proceed. The consequences of Religious Doubt extend beyond the sphere which is regarded as exclusively moral. They reach to the whole life of man, and affect every department of his threefold

being. You cannot isolate doubt, and confine it to a single territory of life; or shut it out from any portion of your trinal nature. Through the channels of the mind religious doubt often affects bodily health and bodily delights. Nothing in medical experience is more common than the bodily distempers produced by religious anxieties. Doubt hangs a cloud over the physical universe. It leaves neither sermons in stones, nor Bibles in brooks, nor God in anything. Religious doubt can find no golden altar in the waving corn; no temple incense in the fragrant flower; no ephod in the lily's robe; no heavenly anthem in the music of the stars. The distinct and active Personal Providence of God is not consciously existent to Religious Doubt. To religious doubt, physical nature is not, as it was to Christ and is still to His disciples, instinct with parables of spiritual truth. To the doubting mind all in nature is law: nothing in nature is love. Doubt leaves physical man, and the physical world, in the grip of the dead hand of materialism. And from materialism melancholy is born. The gates of doubt open into the road of despair.

Often, indeed, doubt does not develop itself into the fulness of cynical melancholy and confirmed despair. It stops short; and, among the intellectual and kind-hearted, rests in a generous and contented agnosticism. "In his remorseless logic, Spinoza, *e.g.*, cut off all religious motives and incentives to virtue, rooted up the foundations of morality in our conceptions of God, and in the relations of God to man."[1]

[1] That he rejects a moral providence or creative mind is manifest in every one of his propositions. Cf. Hallam's "History of Literature," iv. 110.

Yet Spinoza remained to the last a frugal, kind, true-hearted man. But among those who, after his death, adopted his system, multitudes were conspicuous for their sensuous cynicism, their Chinese sense of egotistic superiority, their ignoble voluptuousness, their reckless frivolity. The selfish, Epicurean cast of thought which distinguished the eighteenth century was no remote consequence of the philosophies which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries banished God into exile.

(5) But this sending of God into exile implied, though not always manifested, in Religious Doubt has other consequences, besides melancholy and voluptuousness. Those who doubt of what is least evident will gradually begin to doubt things more evident. For as faith grows by believing: so doubt grows by doubting. Doubt in things several develops into doubt in things general. Indulgence in particular doubts slowly fosters a doubting disposition: a universal laxity and infirmity of temperament, the end of which often is to suspect all persons and to dispute all things. And as a result of suspicion and disputatiousness, there follows an all-round loosening of belief in goodness and truth of every kind. The habit of doubting begets the habit of perceiving, and fixing upon, objections to things: a habit which discovers, by a sort of clever perversity and untoward instinct, what is to be said *against*, and remains blind to what is to be said *for*, any course of thought and any method of action.

This wavering, indeterminate, contrary cast of mind is fatal to all sustained purpose, and high resolve, and positive progress. It takes the backbone out of

the structure of society: and leaves the commonwealth in the condition of melting wax. It is taste without appetite, and brain without heart, and mind without will. It is artistic, æsthetic, analytical; but neither coherent, nor stimulating, nor productive. It is brilliant at repartee: ready with ridicule: pregnant with scorn: but it confirms nothing, and comforts no one, and never exalts the tone of things. It has no *summum bonum*, no ideal good, no grandeur of resolve. Its social and political effects are depressing. It challenges the divine sanction of law, it patronizes the powers that be, it has no fervour for the fatherland. It belittles everything: and looks at the heavens through the wrong end of the telescope.

It is especially freezing towards enthusiasm, and the achievements of faith. And yet if, as we have seen,[1] sound criticism is wholesome; and the doubt of old errors is often the harbinger of new truths; none the less is it certain that the doubting disposition, the doubting for doubt's sake, the limp and lame habit of doubting to the extent (as it comes to pass) of doubting our very doubts, achieves nothing. You might as well attempt to make ropes of sand, or build a castle on the waves, as expect either social progress or political stability to ensue from religious doubt. Religion is the foundation and cement of human society.[2] Enthusiasm is the life-giving wind of the social and political atmosphere. Without enthusiasm both social aims and political enterprises would grow stagnant and corrupt. It is enthusiasm which lifts the world onward and upward. They who believe nothing; do nothing. Belief is great.

[1] Cf. pp. 252, 253.

[2] Walton's "Life of Hooker," p. 29.

The history of a nation becomes fruitful, elevating, great, so soon as it believes. Doubt is not intellectual only ; it is moral also : a chronic atrophy and disease of the whole mind and heart. A man lives by believing something, not by arguing about many things.[1] Nations thrive on the mountains of faith, and amid the breezes of enthusiasm. And the higher the mountains, and the more keen the breezes, the healthier, and more strenuous, is the social and political life of mankind. And of all faith, faith in God is the most life-giving for man. They who have not faith in the Divine Fatherhood do not long maintain their faith in the human brotherhood. And so, in the end, religious doubt, by engendering and fostering the general disposition to doubt, proves hostile to both the social and political advancement of mankind.

Even within the Christian Church, and among religious leaders, this deadening consequence of doubt is clearly visible. The doubting mind, *i.e.* the mind which is unable to accept dogmatic assertions on the strength of authority alone—the mind which proves all things—has beyond question done incalculable service to the Christian Church. It is owing to the exercise of the spirit of free enquiry that the Christian Church, or at any rate the Reformed Branches of it, have been preserved from many pretentious infallibilities, and dogmatic tyrannies, and intellectual absurdities. Liberal Christianity, Broad Churchmanship —what is sometimes in tones of scorn denominated Latitudinarianism—has been the salt of Christendom : its preserving, purifying salt. Yet, on the other

[1] Carlyle's "Mahomet," and "Man of Letters," *passim*.

hand, although Liberal Christianity has been strong to resist doctrinal corruption and ecclesiastical despotism; it has been weak to resist its own languor. As a solvent of error it has been strong: but as an advocate of truth it has been feeble. Its good has been negative rather than positive. Christian intellectualists are seldom missionaries: they are deficient in zeal. Broad Churchmanship is too much of a moderating, too little of a moving power. It proves and tests all things; but it frequently fails to hold fast that which is good, and to press forward the truth, with stimulating energy, to the goal of victory. It is great in knowledge, great in intellect; but in enthusiasm it is far from great. Even its charity, and its toleration, smack of indifference. The history of Liberal Christianity is a striking evidence of the truth that, if Christianity is to convert the world, Christian leaders must not only doubt what is doubtful and destroy what is false; but they must be sure of what is certain, and proclaim what is true, with might and main, with conviction and enthusiasm. To do nothing but doubt is deadly to religious life and progress.

(6) There is a sixth Consequence of religious doubt which psychologically is very interesting. This is the extraordinary, and extravagant, credulity so commonly manifested by religious doubters. It has been often observed that one of the strange peculiarities of unbelievers is that, they are not seldom more subject to petty superstitions than other men. Incredulous towards orthodoxy, they are credulous towards heterodoxy; incredulous towards miracles, they are credulous towards mesmerism; incredulous towards Scriptural revelation, they are credulous towards the

revelations of spirit-rapping; incredulous towards faith, they are credulous towards superstition; incredulous towards the Divinity of Christ, they are credulous towards the authority of ghosts. This credulous incredulity is an altogether strange matter, yet it is quite a common phenomenon. Sceptics often turn Spiritualists: and Agnostics become Ultramontanes: and free-thinking Secularists become slavish devotees of Mahatmas. Extremes meet; and the most excessive doubters often become the most excessive devotees.

Why is this? Can any rational explanation be given of this strange phenomenon of credulous incredulity? Several explanations are current: each of which contains a portion of truth. One explanation is that the habit of doubting makes persons singularly liable to deception by clever plausibilities. The truths of religion are often deep: their proof requires long, sustained attention. And when truths are great and profound, arguments against these truths are often both more intelligible, and plausible, than arguments on their behalf. A child can raise objections which a philosopher cannot answer; at least not so as to carry conviction to the child. There are few truths which may not be doubted, and plausibly objected to. In all departments of knowledge, the fine perception of truth is much more rare than its non-perception. A great part of what is called sceptical philosophy is but the idle art of asking questions without finding answers; of making easy objections without mastering difficult replies. Sound judgment, and ripe knowledge, are displayed rather in patient enquiry than in plausible denial.

We ought not to measure our souls, says one of our greatest novelists,[1] by the force of the negations in us. Men might as well boast of nausea as a proof of a strong inside. A general talent for plausible objections to religion is not so much a proof that religion is false, as an evidence that the objector is an easy dupe of plausibilities. That some religious doubts are philosophically profound is certain; but it is equally certain that others are merely plausible. And when once the mind has grown accustomed to entertain itself with plausibilities of any kind; it easily falls a prey to plausibilities of every kind. It is thus that the plausibilities of religious doubt prepare the way for the plausibilities of superstition. Those who begin by being incredulous of the infinitely great, end by being credulous of the infinitesimally little.

Another reason sometimes given for the credulous incredulity of which religious doubters often become victims, is their desire for peace of mind at any price. Men grow weary of the conflicts of creeds: weary of the ceaseless din of philosophic speculations: weary of sick tossings in rudderless ships on billows of unresting thought: weary of the utter wretchedness of incertitude on matters of eternal moment:—and so they fly for rest to any haven, the haven of dogmatic infallibility, the haven of spiritualistic manifestations. In sheer despair they clutch at any straw. At one mad bound they leap from belief in nothing to belief in anything. Wrathful and tired of floundering in the bogs to which sceptical reason has allured them; they dethrone sceptical reason, and

[1] "Felix Holt," p. 233.

yield themselves to the guidance of superstitious unreason. Having vainly sought peace in religious doubt, they ensure for themselves tranquillity in irrational credulity.

Then, too, some dispositions eagerly embrace novelty: even the semblance of novelty is attractive to them. They change quickly, judge lightly, act passionately, fancy strongly, and repent speedily and often.[1] In an incredibly short space of time they will ring on their own tongues many diverse changes of opinion. They are ever enthusiastic advocates of the last new theme. To nothing are they constant long. That a thing is new is, for the moment, sufficient proof that it is also true. And though not absolutely new, yet so long as it is new to them, however often tried by others, it has for them a novel charm. And when things are charming to us, we are fondly credulous towards them. Man always believes, says Bacon, more readily that which he prefers: his feelings imbue and corrupt his understanding in innumerable, and sometimes imperceptible ways.[2] And so the charm of novelty makes easy great feats of credulity.

But the victims of credulity are by no means always the shallow worshippers of novelty, and the ready dupes of plausibility. Some of them are among the best reasoners and hardest thinkers. For the stronger the reason, the greater also often is the early scepticism; and the greater, too, is the later credulity which frequently follows the early scepticism.

[1] Cf. Bacon's "Novum Organon," lvi., and Bishop Jeremy Taylor's Works, ix. 237.

[2] "Novum Organon," xlix.

Now this credulity may be partly explained by the well-known fact that minds of the highest order of ability, and of an inquisitive turn, have special temptations to be speculative rather than judicial. A keen student of human nature gives the following diagnosis of this type of sceptical philosopher:—"his animal frame is generally characterized by sluggish appetites, languid passions, and great nervous energy: his intellectual nature by subtlety to seize distinctions more than by wit to detect analogies; by the power to dive, instead of the faculty to soar; by skill to analyze subjective truths, rather than by ability to combine them with each other, and with objective realities, into one symmetrical structure."[1] This analysis clearly shews why it is that men of great intellectual powers, astute logicians, high and clear thinkers, are sometimes better speculators in thought than judges of truth. It is because they are able to dissect the whole of a question into its several parts; yet not able to combine the parts into a whole. Highly developed in ratiocinative acumen: they are deficient in judicial power. And where the judgment is weak: the more keenly intellectual men are, the more liable they also are to sceptical doubts on the one hand, and on the other to inroads of credulity. Thus another explanation of credulous incredulity is to be found in the lack of judicial power.

There remains one further explanation of the credulity of religious doubters. This explanation is found in the fact of the trinal unity of man; and in the limitation of force possessed by each individual for distribution among the several parts of his trinal

[1] Stephen's "Ecclesiastical Biographies," ii. 4.

unity.[1] Man is a being of three beings.[2] He has a body, soul, and spirit. And each several portion of his trinal nature requires its own proper sustenance; and if proper sustenance be denied to it, it will, in its hunger, turn to food of unwonted kinds. If the body is starved; in its starvation it will devour the husks which swine do eat. If the mind is starved: and rational nutriment is withheld from it, it will stem its cravings by discussion, and meditation, upon most irrational follies. So, too, if the heart is starved; it is in danger of attempting to appease by lust the hunger and the yearnings of love. Similarly, if the spirit is starved; if natural spiritual food be not supplied—the unsatisfied and craving spirit will devour food that is unnatural. Some kind of sustenance the spirit of man, by the very necessities of spiritual hunger, is compelled to seek. The appetites of the spirit, like the appetites of the body and the soul, imperiously demand their proper food. They will not suffer themselves to famish; without an effort to obtain some kind of satisfaction. And if, through the spiritual poverty, and famine, of religious doubt, they are unable to obtain the natural sustenance which rational faith and rational worship supply; then, in their starvation, these appetites fly for appeasement to irrational superstitions and irrational credulities. Superstitious credulity is thus a kind of natural consequence of religious doubt. It is the revenge of the famished spirit in retaliation for the denial of its natural food.

It should be noted, before summing up this part of our subject, that this revenge of the famished spirit,

[1] Cf. pp. 145, *et seq.* [2] Cf. Wordsworth's "Excursion," bk. i.

inciting it to fly to the husks of superstition for the satisfaction of cravings caused by the withholding of true religious sustenance, is not so much of the character of a special revenge: as of a revenge natural and necessary. As the consequences of physical hunger are natural: so the consequences of spiritual hunger are natural also. Neither man's body, nor man's soul, nor man's spirit, can live without food. Yet in body, soul, and spirit—each alike—there is a natural and persistent desire to live. No part of man willingly perishes. And in the desire for life there is of necessity contained the desire for satisfying food. If, then, this natural desire be unfulfilled: there follows, inevitably, the natural consequence.

Moreover, as experience daily proves, things are followed by their consequences, without regard to the motives for which the things themselves are done. "Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be:"[1] without much respect to the motive of the action, or the cause of the thing. Moralists, of course, know well that the moral quality of action is conditioned by motive. And Christians are fully persuaded that, in the final Judgment of God, great weight will be allowed to heredity, and environment, and all other circumstances telling upon the non-spontaneity of human conduct. There is no question among believers that the Judge of all the earth will do right. God is without controversy mercifully just and justly merciful.

None the less, experience teaches us that both things and actions are, according to the dispensation

[1] Butler's "Analogy," part ii. p. 85.

under which man is now living, attended by their natural consequences without much regard to motives. Whether I swallow poison by mistake, or on purpose, makes no difference to the operation of the deleterious drug. Theories of education make no difference to the consequences necessarily following over-pressure and ignorance. Innocent miscalculations and profligate gambling both alike often terminate in ruin. In the realm of conscience motive always makes a world of difference ; but in the realm of consequences motive frequently makes no difference in the world. And as with other things, so with religious doubt. In the final Judgment of religious doubters, the motives of doubters will unquestionably count ; but in the present consequences, natural to religious doubt, motive has no more effect than it has on the deadliness of poison, or the havoc of pestilence. Spiritual laws are what they are, and man's spiritual nature is what it is ; and the consequence of starving that nature, and neglecting those laws, is neither to change the laws nor to demolish the nature. It is only to incur the necessary revenge of nature, and the inevitable penalties of law.

Believing things does not make them to be ; nor doubting them make them not to be. As Galileo grandly said : "Men may admit or condemn things ; but it is not in the power of any creature to make them true or false, or otherwise than of their own nature and in fact they are." God either is or He is not : Christ either died to save us, or He did not : there either is, or is not, a Day appointed for the final Judgment of man. These things are either facts or figments. But as it is not our faith which

makes them facts; so our doubt cannot make them figments. It is in themselves, and irrespective of both our confession and denial, that they are either facts or figments. Doubt and faith have consequences incalculable upon ourselves; but upon the truth of the case, and the facts as they are, neither our doubt, nor our faith, has any result. It is related of Professor Jowett that, being once asked, "What do you think of God?" after a deep pause he quietly replied: "The more important question is, what God thinks of me." So with religious doubt. The important question is not so much what its consequences will be upon religion; as what they will be upon the doubter.

In this Chapter, while frankly acknowledging the beneficial result of religious doubt, we have sketched, in outline, some of its inevitable injurious consequences:—the lowering of men's ideals, both of themselves, and of their mission to mankind; the lessening of their power to resist evil, and cleave to good; the imperilling of the best of all the tried foundations for morality; the general loosening of belief in goodness and truth; the chilling of enthusiasm and the fostering of credulity. We have, moreover, seen that these consequences follow religious doubt as effect follows cause. They are natural consequences: consequences necessary and inevitable. As darkness follows the disappearance of the sun, so these consequences follow the disappearance of faith. Man can generally decide whether he will believe or not; but the consequences of his decision lie beyond his reach, and are not left to his deciding. The consequences of religious doubt will be what they will

be; and we have no power of ourselves either to check or to obviate them.

Before concluding the Chapter, five other consequences of religious doubt may briefly be alluded to.

(*a*) There is the pessimism which commonly ensues upon Religious Doubt. "Time itself, let alone Eternity, is all but excruciating to Doubt. Many besides Schopenhauer have secretly regarded Consciousness as the hideous mistake and malady of Nature."[1] To all men, whether believers or doubters, the course of human life, and of the world in which we live, is a tremendous enigma. Tremendous and also terrible. The cruelties of Nature are frightful; the resistless course of law knows neither compassion nor sympathy. And what is worse: man himself is the source of much suffering. In his savage state, man takes a horrid delight in the infliction of pain; and in his civilized state, when his passions are aroused, he is not less cruel than the savage. Seductions, the havoc of lusts, avarice, pride, maliciousness, war, revenge:—these horrors are practised by civilized man, with a selfishness more guilty, because less ignorant, than the selfishness of barbarous man. Neither man himself, nor the world in which man lives, is satisfying to either intellect or heart. And the more sensitive man is, the less is he satisfied. The development of consciousness proceeds in a ratio inverse to the development of contentedness; and without faith in the life of the world to come, life in the world that is becomes to sensitive men all but intolerable. Immortality, indeed, opens out a large hope which may overpay the unspeakable bitterness

[1] Cf. Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," p. 420.

of life; but without the hope of immortality, the spirit of multitudes would faint and sink beneath the burden of the miseries and perplexities of the present condition of things. Eliminate faith in a personal, and immortal, future; and Nirvāna—the dreary passion for absorption or extinction—will soon be the heaven of mankind: its one remaining hope. For pessimism, whether in the form of a philosophy or a religion, is a natural consequence of religious doubt.

(*b*) Another consequence is the forfeiting of spirituality. The spiritual faculty is the highest of the ascending faculties of man: higher than his physical, intellectual, moral, emotional, or volitional faculties. It is the faculty which apprehends God, and lays hold on eternal truths. But religious doubt is fatal to the development of this faculty. Religious doubt withholds from the spirit its proper nourishment; and denies to the spirit its proper exercise. For the religious doubter, prayer has no energy; worship is without impulse; revelation is dubious; sacraments are a human device. Through not believing in these things, the doubter ceases to practise them. Suspicion of all things religious gradually takes the place of belief; and with the growth of suspicion there generally goes a decay of spiritual exercise and spiritual power. The consequence of doubt is often manifested in gradual despiritualization, in gradual diminution of spiritual power, gradual overshadowing of spiritual light.

(*c*) But the consequences of doubt are sometimes more disastrous on others than on the originators of the doubts themselves. For doubt is catching. It is like the pestilence that walketh in darkness: its

infectious poisons pervade the air. Doubt creates around itself its own atmosphere: an atmosphere which penetrates unbidden into the hearts and homes of believers—unsettling their faith, disturbing their peace, overclouding their joy. Of course, in matters of essential truth and vital principle, consequences must be disregarded. We must seek for truth, and fight for principles, regardless of consequences: faithful to right even at the risk of inflicting pain on others. Indeed the pain-giving power, or at least the courage not to shrink from inflicting pain, is a most necessary part of a well-organized human being. True men neither shrink from suffering pain themselves; nor what is harder still, from giving pain to others: whenever the cause of truth and right demands the infliction. But how few such causes are! The questions raised by religious doubt are frequently questions of opinion, not of principle; speculations, rather than searchings, in truth; questions of date and procedure rather than of thing and fact. Religion is unquestionably a matter of supreme importance: both to society and individual men. It has conferred great advantages on mankind: advantages of a genuine, substantial kind. It is, therefore, a manifest obligation lying upon every man not to disturb, or unsettle, religion; unless he is quite sure either that truth demands the disturbance, or that the advantages of unsettlement greatly outweigh its disadvantages. Mrs. Humphry Ward asks these two questions in her famous story of "David Grieve." (1) Why attack revealed religion and so seek to deprive others of numberless real benefits for the sake of establishing a merely speculative truth? (2) Ought not the

certainty of doing a moral mischief to outweigh, with any just and kindly mind, the much feebler and less solid certainty we may imagine ourselves to have attained with regard to certain matters of history and criticism? Both these questions deserve the serious consideration of the Apostles of religious doubt. Not, indeed, that the questions are final; because truth demands homage regardless of consequences; yet, without controversy, they are weighty and momentous questions.

For it cannot but be a source of regret to a good man to unsettle the religion of his fellow-men.[1] For consider what religion is to the poor, and the tempted, and the sick, and the sorrowful. To the poor the Gospel is wealth; to the tempted it is strength; to the sick it is balm; to the sorrowful it is comfort. "Stedfast faith is a spell for all necessities of life: but in no necessity is it more beneficent than in that of mental necessity. It clears the intellect and enables it, freed from distracting perplexity, to concentrate itself upon the duty of the hour, in the certain confidence that the future will be guided by an Unerring Intelligence."[2] Now to rob others, in sheer intellectual wantonness, of the Christian stimulus to duty and patience is a serious responsibility; a responsibility which no just or generous man would incur without a deep persuasion of commanding necessity. In the name of truth let all

[1] "What delight can a man find in employing a capacity which might be usefully exerted for the noblest purposes, in a sort of sullen labour in which, if the author could succeed, nothing could be more fatal to mankind than his success?" (Burke's Preface to "Essay on Natural Society").

[2] "Sir Percival."

things false be pitilessly abandoned; but in the name of charity let every genuine solace and inspiration of religion be most tenderly preserved.

The world is full enough of miseries without adding the misery of doubting half-belief. For half-belief is a tormenting misery. It has neither the strength of callousness belonging to atheism; nor the strength of patience belonging to faith. Doubt possesses none of the supports either of belief or unbelief. Downright unbelief has, at least, the tranquillity of darkness and sleep. But doubt is neither wholly in the dark, nor yet spiritually asleep. It is in a condition of half-light and half-consciousness; and can neither rouse itself to strenuous action nor compose itself to stolid indifference. And in this condition it is a prey to all the miseries of incertitude; bereft both of the energy of direct negation and of the assurance of positive belief.

Moreover if doubt is second-hand its helplessness is intensified. The original doubter, *i.e.* the person whose own course of thought, and whose own deeply felt dissatisfaction with the commonplace traditions of Christendom, have compelled him, by their own inward force, to call in question many accepted beliefs, and to cast aside many commonly received opinions;—such a person is frequently upheld, amid the unsettlements of doubt, by the hot activities of battle, and by deep personal interest in its issue. But the second-hand doubter, the doubter whose doubts are borrowed, the doubter who has not thought himself into doubt but has been talked into it by others, has not even the support supplied by the interests of heroic conflict. Such a doubter

simply drifts. And when religious principle has been unsettled by doubts borrowed, and second-hand; who can tell into what quagmires, or over what precipices, the doubter will stumble? The original doubter may reach some safe shore because he is strenuously pulling against the stream. But the fate of the mere drifting doubter who can forecast; or forecast otherwise than gloomily?

For all these reasons—the dangers of mere drifting, the helplessness of half-belief, the pains inflicted by the loss of faith—it is clearly the plain duty of doubters to be cautious in the dissemination of doubt. Nothing short of the sovereign claims of absolute truth is a sufficient plea in extenuation for spreading the infection of doubt. No one can say *what*, or how disastrous, the consequences of unsettling the religious beliefs of others may be. In the strength of his own self-formed convictions, the original doubter may stand firm amidst the swellings of sorrow and the onslaughts of temptation. But the doubter whose doubts are only the result of infection, and not of conviction, may perhaps not be able to stand. And if he falls on whom will the responsibility finally rest? In face of such a question, it is surely worth the while of every just and kindly man to consider the serious hazard, perchance the actual wrong, of loosening the foundations of another's faith —however simple and traditional that faith may be— unless something more strong, more true, more ennobling can be substituted in its place.

(*d*) Another consequence of religious doubt is to be seen in its influence on the general tone of the Christian Church; and especially on the character

of the clergy. It is commonly supposed that the results of doubt are altogether beneficial to the Church in clearing away the mists of prejudice, in broadening and liberalizing the general consciousness of the Church, in preparing the way for a rational, comprehensive Christianity. And in all these directions it may be freely conceded that doubt has been advantageous to the Church. It is scarcely conceivable what the Church might have been, both in doctrine and practice, but for the restraining influences of doubt. Doubt has ever been the foe of ecclesiastical despotism and dogmatic hardness. Every Reformation of the Church, whether in discipline or doctrine, has been nursed in the cradle of doubt. Errors are first doubted, then denied. The Humanists are the natural comrades of the Reformers.

Yet, on the other hand, although religious doubt has proved beneficial in relaxing the fetters which it is in the very nature of unchallenged ecclesiasticism to impose: still, even in its effects on the Church and her ministers, religious doubt has not been wholly beneficial. For in the struggle between the maintainers of any religious opinion and the challengers of that opinion; one side must win the victory. The side that wins styles itself orthodox; and at the same time dubs its defeated opponents heterodox. If the orthodox have political power they then proceed to persecute the heterodox: a method of procedure by no means always unfavourable to heresy, seeing that persecution which stops short of extermination is not unfrequently fruitful in advantage to the persecuted. In any case, whether victorious orthodoxy has political power or not, it emerges from

the smoke of its conquests more resolutely orthodox than before. It gathers the skirts of its orthodoxy more closely around it. It shuts itself up more sternly within the narrow limits of its own opinions. It pours the breath of the basilisk on its adversaries. It arrogates to itself the sole possession of the keys of heaven ; and constitutes itself a kind of infallible deity on earth.

The history of Churches abounds in illustrations of this law of ecclesiastical antagonism : this tendency of victorious orthodoxy to become narrower, and more dogmatic, after every struggle with the enquiries of doubt. At last triumphant orthodoxy reaches the stage when reason is dethroned, and anathema is crowned. At this stage to question is to sin. The penalties of doubt are no longer the natural torments of intellectual disquietude ; but peremptory adjudications to ecclesiastical Gehennas. The principal remedies prescribed for doubt by triumphant orthodoxy are submission and stupor : the submission of conscience and the stupor of intellect. Under these circumstances the clergy grow stagnant in progressive theology. In traditional theology they are active enough : there is no lack of industry, and scholarship, and cleverness in marshalling proofs from the Bible and the Fathers that what the Church teaches is right. But by the stringency of their ordination vows the clergy of a professedly infallible Church are practically forbidden to consider the case against themselves. They are professional, often brilliant, advocates of the *status quo*. By the decrees of their Community a curse is upon them if they doubt those decrees ; and question the declared opinions of their

Church. It is almost as if the Ptolemaic astronomers had formed a close community which had decreed their system to be true; and forbidden further enquiry; and conspired together to threaten and to terrorize all who dared to question it. Under such circumstances nothing would have been left for enquiring astronomers but to cut themselves off from the Ptolemaic community; to brave the excommunicating curse; and to leave the Ptolemaists severely to themselves.

Something like this has been a consequence of religious doubt upon the Church: particularly upon the Unreformed branches of it. Doubt has caused conflict in these Churches. The result of the conflict has generally been the expulsion of the doubters: and the result of this expulsion, the hardening and narrowing of orthodoxy, together with the crushing of free thought and the stifling of full enquiry. And if free personal enquiry into theological truth is condemned, then it is evident that the business of theological advocates must be not to find the truth: but to prove that the truth has been found, and that their own Church is in exclusive possession of it. To question the authority of their Church, or to disprove its dogmas, is reckoned tantamount to de-Christianization. And what is the inevitable consequence? It is that the main bulk of thoughtful persons (persons who can distinguish words from things, persons who believe that truth is not an affair to be settled by Councils but by the facts of the case, persons who are unable to convince themselves through the medium of external authority however venerable and august) hold aloof from Unreformed Churches;

and leave them severely alone. Nothing is more notorious, or more surely attested, than that the intelligence of Christendom is not with, but against, the Unreformed Churches of Christendom : and that it has been partly in consequence of this gradual severance between enquiry and faith that the Roman Church has been able to promulgate its novel dogma of Infallibility. The Roman Church, by the Tridentine decrees, having anathematized all doubtings and denials of her orthodoxy ; and having excommunicated all opinions contrary to Romanism, there was no obstacle left in the way of unanimity. And when any body of persons are unanimous—as even the Commons' House of Parliament might be, if the majority could once extrude the minority and ever afterwards co-opt others of their mind—then it is a simple matter to decree anything, even Infallibility. This decreeing of Infallibility, and all similar in-narrowings of orthodoxy in other branches of the Christian Church, has been an almost direct consequence of religious doubt. Doubters have either held aloof, or have been driven, from the fold of orthodoxy: and orthodoxy, deprived of the restraining influence of opposition, has out-orthodoxed itself, by first petrifying its dogmas, and then imagining them to be infallible.

What will be the end of this estrangement between thought and dogma, between advancing knowledge and stationary creeds, between the movements of enquiring fallibility and the motionlessness of non-enquiring infallibility; it is impossible to predict. But two things are sure. (1) Truth is true. No number of decrees can ever make things other than

in themselves they are. It is not in the power even of Churches to make things to be which are not: or things not to be which are. (2) And, secondly, unless the enlightened among men cast in their lot with the Christian Church: unless the Christian Church can find room within its pale for free enquiry and honest search after truth :—the gulf between the Church and the mind of man will be widened; the Church will grow more petrified, religious doubters will be still further alienated, and the separation between orthodoxy and knowledge will be final. In face of these two certainties, may I not appeal to all those honest doubters, who, in spite of doubts on other things, are loyal to their Lord and the simplicities of His original Gospel, to be true to their Captain? Now is no time for holding aloof. There are thousands, unknown and silent thousands, who have not bowed the knee to mere assertion; who worship only at the shrine of clear and conscious truth; and who, if banded together in devotion to Christ, might work wonders in simplifying, and enlarging, and strengthening, the Christian Church. Truth is strong; and Christ ever liveth. Let the army of those who, although doubtful of many minor things, are yet confident in the strength of truth, and are stimulated by love to the Living Lord, no longer keep back; but band themselves together and arise to battle. Then, whatever else is doubtful, their ultimate victory is beyond doubt secure.

(*e*) There remains for brief consideration one further consequence of religious doubt. We have considered the consequences of doubt upon the doubter, upon the world in which the doubter moves, and upon

the Church from which the doubter withdraws himself. But has doubt no consequences towards God? It is always unseemly for man to speak with the assumption of certainty concerning the probable action of God. The thoughts of man cannot reach to the ways of God. And yet, if man has been made in the image of God, the best feelings and noblest thoughts of man must, of necessity, bear some resemblance to the thoughts and feelings of God. And, in man's highest moments—when the mind is not entangled amid the contortions of reticulated formulæ and the heart is warmed with the fires of charity—it is impossible for him to conceive of the Divine displeasure resting on honest, painful, and unwilling doubt. At the same time it is equally impossible to conceive of the Divine Father as indifferent to the doubts of His children; or the Divine Saviour as indifferent to the doubts of those for whom He died; or the Divine Sanctifier as indifferent to the doubts of those with whom, on behalf of holiness, He so often pleads. The difference between faith and doubt is so enormous to man: the consequences of the wilful indulgence of doubt are so serious, and yet so sure, to the doubter, to the world, to the Church of God: that it is impossible, I think, to conceive of God as indifferent to the religious doubts of mankind, without first conceiving of Him as indifferent to the religious progress of humanity, and the spiritual development of man. "Without faith it is impossible to please God."[1] It, therefore, behoves religious doubters to take careful heed lest, by the indulgence of doubt, their faith should grow practically extinct.

[1] Heb. xi. 6.

For no one who either wilfully or carelessly allows his faith to be extinguished can reasonably expect to seem well-pleasing to God. And of all the consequences of religious doubt none can conceivably be more serious, or more fearful, than that of meriting and incurring the Divine displeasure.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VICTORY OVER RELIGIOUS DOUBT.

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."—ISA. l. 10.

"The rest from individual effort, the calm after long striving, the secret joy in God, the acquiescing in His will, in which the true elevation of devotion lies, and which is, not the effect of lively imaginations or of fruitful inventions—of these all men are not capable, but all may reach the silent and humble adoration of God which arises out of a pure and quiet mind; just as when a man enters into an entire friendship with another, then the single thought of his friend affects him more tenderly than all that variety of affections which may arise in his mind where this union is not felt."—*John Inglesant.*

THE methods of overcoming Religious Doubt are as various as its causes. In considering the Causes of Religious Doubt we saw that they are partly physical, owing to the condition of the body; partly intellectual, owing to the turn of the mind; partly moral, owing to the disposition of the heart and will; partly accidental, owing to circumstances of environment; and partly spiritual, owing to some infirmity, or lack of development in the spiritual nature.[1] In seeking, therefore, for methods of alleviating, or overcoming, religious doubt; due regard, in each particular case, should be paid to the origin of the doubt. General treatment is not, of itself, sufficient. Particular treatment, in each several instance, is also

[1] Cf. Chapter V.

necessary. In this respect doubt is not unlike disease. In cases of disease it is not enough to lay down the general laws of health. The observance of these laws is an essential part of all remedial methods. But, in addition, each particular disease requires its own proper treatment. Similarly with religious doubt. In addition to the healthy observance of the general laws for the cultivation of faith ; the special cause for doubt, in each particular instance, must be examined, and the appropriate treatment pursued. Physical remedies will not avail for intellectual doubts ; nor intellectual remedies for moral doubts ; nor moral remedies for spiritual doubts. If doubt is idle, the first thing to cultivate is seriousness ; if wilful, humility ; if intellectual, awe ; if immoral, goodness ; if spiritual, holiness. The essential point, however, is, that the special cause for every doubt must be discovered before the doubt itself can be removed.

Then, too, as we have previously seen,[1] religious doubt is by no means always wrong. On the contrary many things are doubted, not because of any imperfection in the doubter, but because the things themselves are doubtful ; leaving abundant room for debate, division, contrariness of opinion and belief. In every department of human life, and particularly in the sphere of religion, there are many matters which, by the ordering of God, have been left in uncertainty. In all such matters the way of doubt seems better than the way of shallow and fictitious assurance. It is not, therefore, of doubt concerning things wholesomely left doubtful, nor of doubt of things accessory and indifferent, that this chapter is intended

[1] Cf. p. 21.

to treat; but only of doubts concerning things fundamental—the existence of God, redemption from sin, eternal life, final accountability — doubts such as involve in themselves consequences of exceeding great moment.

(1) In seeking to conquer doubt of this fundamental and serious kind, the first thing I would emphasize is the importance of not growing morbid over our doubts. Morbidity is injurious to the development of faith: for faith is a robust and strenuous growth. It requires light, and air, and exercise. To be morbid over religion is like being morbid over health. Men anxious about health seldom continue healthy for long. Even when they escape from active disease they sink down, through brooding, into mere valetudinarians. If men desire to be healthy, let them lead a free healthy life, and leave health to follow of itself. Anxiety about health is commonly destructive of healthiness; and invariably destructive of the joy of healthiness. Similarly with doubt. To be morbid over doubt is not the way to develop faith. When men anxiously brood, and fret, over their doubts; they are in danger of sinking down into religious hypochondriacs. For them, even if faith survives, the joy of faith is gone. Instead of idly brooding, the thing to do is to lead an active, manly, religious life; and leave faith to its own natural germination and growth.

> "In happy toil
> Forget this whirl of doubt. We are weak
> Only when still: put thou thine hand to the plough
> The spirit drives thee on."[1]

[1] "The Saint's Tragedy."

Doubts are often mere idle puzzles of the brain: puzzles whose solution is more readily attained by the light of experience and duty, than by the force of cogitation and argument. In all such cases think as little of your doubts as you can. Cease to exhaust yourself concerning them. Seek better health of body: cultivate brightness of disposition. Pursue whatever course is most restful and cheerful. Go to the mountains. Among the mountains men often find and feel their faith. Commune with the beauties and the voices of Nature.

> "To the solid ground
> Of Nature trusts the mind that builds for aye:
> Convinced that there, there only, she can lay
> Secure foundations."

On the other hand it will not do to try and satisfy genuine doubt by wholly ceasing to think. Ceasing to think is worse for man than continuing in doubt. God has endowed man with the noble gift of reason: to stop the free working of reason is, therefore, to interrupt the operation of one of man's most noble powers. Moreover, no rational doubt is really cured by ceasing to think. It may be crushed, but cannot be cured, by the force of authority: whether the force be exercised by the doubter himself in resolutely putting his doubts away, or by some external authority which imperatively forbids the doubter to doubt. When rational doubts are thus irrationally crushed, they often avenge themselves by uprising again with multiplied vitality and vigour. It is not thinking, it is idle thinking—the thinking which wearily treads, and re-treads, the circles of barren thought, instead of exercising itself in the planes of

fruitful action—which is hostile to faith. Let doubters never cease to think; but let them not think idly and morbidly. Neither idle faith nor idle doubt is worthy of our manhood. As faith finds its true sphere in noble activity; so one of the antidotes for doubt is good and useful work. At any rate, whether doubt is conquered or not by the blessed activities of work, its morbidity is certainly dispelled; and that, of itself, is an abundant gain.

> "Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
> And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!
> She reels not in the storm of warring words,
> She brightens at the clash of 'Yes' and 'No,'
> She sees the Best that glimmers through the Worst,
> She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,
> She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,
> She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
> She hears the lark within the songless egg,
> She finds the fountain where they wailed 'Mirage.'" [1]

(2) The second point to be gained before doubt can be conquered is the realization that our doubts are probably neither new nor original. They may be new to us; but in themselves they are probably very old. We all like to fancy that our ways of thinking are original; it is even some consolation in our doubtings when we dream that they are novel, that no one has ever navigated such seas of uncertainty before, or explored the depths of such questionings, or scaled the heights of such difficulties. The notion that we are inventors—even if our invention be nothing better than the sorry invention of new difficulties in the way of religion—is a pleasing, because swelling, notion. For at bottom the humblest man is seldom altogether free from vanity. His

[1] Tennyson's "Ancient Sage."

vanity may be hidden from himself: yet generally it is there. Sometimes it is a vanity not wholly ignoble. Often it is a vanity which incites to great enterprises, and sustains heavy toils and painful deprivations. Who, *e.g.*, would seek to deprive M. Ernest Renan of the wreaths due to a long life of assiduous labour; yet who can fail to perceive the true character of one at least of the motives by which those labours were sustained? For M. Renan himself thus confesses towards the close of his laborious life: "My last ambition will be gratified, if, for the benefit of those for whom the old missal no longer suffices, I may hope to enter a Church after my death, in the shape of a small 18mo. book, bound in black morocco, held between the long and slender fingers of an elegantly gloved hand."[1] When a man's ambition is to write a missal of his own, which multitudes of devotees yet unborn shall fondle in their most sacred moments—it is not difficult, I think, to account for his antagonism to rival religions, and to missals, which hold the throne he himself is ambitious to occupy: nor yet for the unflagging zeal, and Herculean industry, and brilliant strategy which are pressed into the service of his antagonism.

M. Renan was conscious of his ambition to overturn existing beliefs, and frankly confesses it. It is otherwise with many apostles of religious doubt. All doubters are not vain enough to imagine like Renan and Haeckel[2] that, upon the ruins of the old religions and the old creeds, they themselves will found new cults, new Churches, new forms of faith. None the

[1] "Studies in Religious History," p. 22.
[2] Cf. Haeckel's "Lecture on Monism."

less the number of doubters is probably few who do not fancy that there is in their own particular doubts some particle of originality, some spark of novelty: and it is the novelty, the supposed originality, which helps to swell and foster their doubts.

And yet the truth is that, except in gait and dress, it is difficult to discover anything new in modern religious doubt. The appearance of modern doubt is occasionally novel; its way of reasoning has sometimes an air of freshness; and its vocabulary, especially among scientific persons, is decidedly original—yet the doubt itself, at the heart and core of it, can seldom be accounted either original, or new. No modern biologist, *e.g.*, would feel himself at liberty to throw more completely into the background all thought of the ordering of the earth by a Personal Providence than did Pliny the distinguished naturalist of imperial Rome. Pliny was so absorbed in material things that the very idea of God was unintelligible, if not distasteful, to him. His Natural History opens with a declaration that the universe is the sole Deity. For him the notion of immortality was an idle notion fostered by pride.[1] The religious doubts of modern science are not, therefore, new doubts; nor its denials, new denials. Physical science has made, in recent times, numerous discoveries within its own domain. It has established the reign of law, has demonstrated the comparative littleness of the planet on which we live, has enlarged our conceptions of the wonders of space, of the developments of life, of the duration of time. But it has neither demonstrated that death is the end of life; nor discovered that God is not.

[1] Cf. Milman's "History of Christianity," i. 39.

None of its doubts upon the fundamental verities of religion are new: none are more conclusive to-day than they were two thousand years ago. The chief modernity in modern doubt is its vocabulary and its dress.

And as with doubts arising from over-absorption in the study or pursuit of material, and physical, things; so also with doubts arising from moral perplexity, and pessimistic theories of evil. These doubts change their form, in successive ages, but their essence remains practically unchanged. In all ages men have toiled in vain to secure satisfactory solutions of the problems connected with the moral government of the world. The plays of the old tragedians are replete with lamentations over the inequalities and the sufferings of human life. To Euripides, *e.g.*, just as to ourselves, the apparent miscarriage of justice was constantly a great stumbling-block to faith. Injustice, he felt, was harder to endure than darkness. In the spectacle of undeserved sufferings, of unrecognized virtues, of cruel inequalities, Euripides found the sorest trials of his faith.[1] For him, as for all who have sought to investigate by reason alone the mysteries of the moral world, the investigation proved endless and bottomless. For Euripides, as for the writer of the Book of Job, the ways of God were past finding out; and the thought of them at times filled his soul with bitterness.[2] Thus the problems set before religion by the moralists, and casuists, of modern times are no new problems. They are as old as the thoughts, and reflections, of men.

[1] Westcott's "Religious Thought in the West," pp. 101-104.
[2] Job ix. 10, 18.

Similarly with most other religious doubts of modern time. They are neither new, nor original. And although their lack of freshness is neither a solution of them, nor any argument against them; yet the full realization, and frank recognition, of their oldness, and of our own non-originality in conceiving them, will probably prove to be no inconsiderable aid in the task of overcoming them.[1]

(3) A third important consideration in preparing for the conquest of religious doubt is the necessity of an enlightened perception of the inconceivable vastness of created things. Modern physics has enlarged our conception of law; modern astronomy, our conception of the numbers without number of worlds that punctually traverse the boundless fields of unimaginable space; modern biology, our conception of the infinite grades of ever-ascending forms of sentient life. But one of the most remarkable of all the consequences of this increase of knowledge is an increased knowledge of the vastness and multitude of things unknown. Every new telescope sweeps into the field of vision some hitherto invisible star. Every discovery of something hitherto undiscovered contains in itself the promise of still further discoveries. Thus the more man discovers, the more certain he grows of the illimitableness of things undiscovered. The very largeness of his knowledge

[1] I make no allusion here to doubts originated by the Higher Criticism of Modern Scholarship (though some of the theories of the Higher Criticism are original) concerning the dates, authorship, and method of compilation of various Books of the Bible: because these questions are not fundamental to faith. Christian men may have diverse opinions upon these questions, while continuing in absolute agreement concerning the essentials of their religion.

in this way becomes an evidence of the littleness of it. The progress of knowledge is, therefore, a progress in the knowledge of the littleness of our knowledge; and, as a natural consequence, a growth in the habit of accustoming ourselves to the idea of our ignorance of countless hosts of things. This idea, nay, this fact, of our ignorance is one of the most wholesome correctives of religious doubt. For upon investigation it will, I think, be found that among religious doubters no small proportion is composed of persons who fancy either that they know more than they really know, or that they have a right to know more. A common cause of religious doubt being, therefore, a discontent with not knowing *why* God did this; or *why* God did not do that; it is a natural remedy for such doubt to be made increasingly conscious of the absolutely inconceivable number of things unknown to the most learned among men. And *à fortiori* if things and facts and worlds are, in countless hosts unknown to us, the origins of worlds and the causes of facts and the purposes of things, may well be considered unknowable. For it is not to be supposed that we are in a position to know *why* things are, so long as we neither know *what* they are, nor *how many* they are, nor *how* each is related to the whole.

There is yet another direction in which the enlargement of knowledge may probably issue in the diminution of religious doubt. The increase of knowledge, and particularly of the knowledge of our ignorance, besides removing the notion that we have either the power or the right to know all things, will tend to change the centre from which we regard the whole

system of things. In a state of unconscious ignorance man is apt to constitute himself his own centre; to magnify his own importance; to imagine that all things revolve around himself, and that he is the cause and end of all things. Now the enlargement of knowledge necessarily involves an enlargement in the knowledge of the littleness and comparative insignificance of man. In ancient days astrologers imagined that the earth was the centre of the sidereal firmament, the largest of all the planets and the spheres; that suns and stars rolled round the earth as humble servitors attending on the earth's imperial, and all-commanding, majesty. This notion of the geocentric system of the heavens was the basis of all the superstitions of astrology. But with the enlargement of knowledge the heliocentric system was discovered: instead of the sun moving round the earth, the earth was proved to roll in servile dependence round the sun: and now we find that neither earth, nor sun, is the real centre of the stars. Suns roll round suns, and systems roll round systems, in inconceivable hosts, of inconceivable magnitude, at inconceivable distances, with inconceivable velocity. And what the centre of all the systems is, astronomy has not yet discerned. One thing, however, has been made sure—the earth is not the centre. Far from being the centre, its infinitesimal size and importance, in relation to the infinitude of other spheres, counts almost as nothing. The earth, instead of being the high-priest in the hierarchy of the spheres, is now known to be one of the humblest acolytes in the temple of the heavens.

Now the centre being changed, all else changes too.

The superstitions of astrology are impossible to enlightened astronomers. The largeness of knowledge has made clear the littleness of the earth; and if the earth be so small, in relation to the whole of things, may we not at least suspect that man is mistaken in magnifying his own importance; in supposing that he is of primal moment in the ordering of things, and that he has either the capacity to understand, or even the right to know, why things are as they are, and not otherwise?

As progress in astronomy was impossible on the assumption that the earth was the centre of the heavens, because of the essential falsity of the assumption; so progress in religion is impossible on the assumption of the central importance of man. Geocentric systems of astronomy were fundamentally vicious, and led, therefore, to all manner of baseless suppositions, and vain theories, and degrading superstitions. Anthropocentric systems of religion, being similarly vicious, involve in themselves similar consequences. When the sun was discovered, and acknowledged, to be the centre of our solar system, its attendant orbs fell naturally into their own rank; the order of things became intelligible, and astrological imaginings disappeared. So likewise when God is discovered, and acknowledged, as the centre of our religious system—by Whom all things exist, towards Whom all things tend, around Whom all things revolve—many questions hitherto dark grow clear, many perplexities are resolved, much religious doubt vanishes. Self-centred man is defeated by doubt; God-centred man gains the victory through faith.

But while fully recognizing the smallness of the earth, as it has been revealed by the modern enlargements of human knowledge; as well as the littleness of man's place in the universe, and of his power either to measure or to fathom all things:—yet that man is, in himself, unimportant, I neither think nor believe. I acknowledge to the full man's inability to grasp such ideas as infinitude and eternity; or to explain the mystery of life, of self, of God; or to understand, and unravel, the problems of evil. I acknowledge also to the full the immeasurable extent of man's ignorance in physics and metaphysics, in ethics and religion: *i.e.* in the whole domain of body, soul, and spirit. I moreover am persuaded that conscious, and confessed, ignorance is a more promising, and more enlightened, condition of mind than the fancy, without the reality, of knowledge. Yet notwithstanding all this, yea rather because of all this, I am fully persuaded of the magnificence of the nature and the glory of the destiny, of man: particularly after death. For if the conscious littleness of man's knowledge be an evidence of man's littleness; the conscious greatness of man's ignorance is a testimony to man's greatness. To be ignorant counts for nothing, brutes are ignorant; but to be sensible of ignorance counts enormously, for brutes have no such sense. They do not know that they know not. God, eternity, the problems of the mind, the perplexities of the heart, the mysteries of the spirit, are non-existent to them. But to man they are clearly, and consciously, existent. He may not be able to solve the problems; yet the problems themselves, he feels, are there. He cannot explain; yet neither can

he explain away. Perplexity, and the sense of mystery, are part of man's existence. They enter into the very constitution of his being. What do they mean?

> "What mean those tameless cravings after more;
> More light on mysteries within, without;
> More love, God's love and man's; more power; more peace;—
> What mean they, if they do not tell that man,
> Made in the great similitude of God,
> And quickened by His recreative Spirit,
> Yearns for the Father's presence and embrace?"[1]

By the conscious greatness of his ignorance, man is led to the hope of his own greatness. To be greatly conscious of not-knowing, and yet yearning to know, is an earnest that the knowledge will be sometime acquired. Else were the consciousness of ignorance, and the appetite for knowledge of these mysteries, imparted and continued, for nothing; which is contrary to the admitted truth that Nature does nothing in vain. If I now understood all things, I should, through the very consciousness of the littleness of my present powers, be convinced that all things were little. Thus my confidence in eternal things, instead of being weakened by my inability to comprehend them, is much strengthened thereby; because if, while in a mortal state, I could wholly grasp them, I should, at least, suspect their non-eternity. But now, because I cannot understand them I feel they are greater than I; and because I can feel the desire to understand them, I may hope both that these great things truly exist, and that even I, may, in course of ages, rise to the greatness of the capacity that comprehends them. And so the

[1] From lines by Bishop Bickersteth of Exeter.

enlargement of man's knowledge, by its revelation of man's ignorance and the increase in the consciousness of that ignorance, is an indirect assurance of man's immortality; and whatever quickens the conviction of immortality helps also to overthrow religious doubt.[1]

(4) A fourth means of overcoming Religious Doubt is the cultivation of simple conceptions of Religion. The essence of Christianity is sublimely simple; the articles of its fundamental Creed are notably few. A man may be a good Christian without accepting, I should suppose, one tenth part of the doctrines which, at one time or other, have been promulgated in the name of Christianity. It is a good thing to be content with a quite simple faith at first:—the faith of the Sermon on the Mount, and the faith of the Apostles' Creed. To say daily the Lord's Prayer and to strive daily to keep the Ten Commandments is a more simple, yet a thousandfold more certain, means of overcoming doubt than all disquisitions and arguments. Opinion doubtless influences conduct, and conduct affects opinion. Yet, after all, the best test of Christian discipleship is not the acceptance of multifarious Christian opinions; but the simple Christian life. "The best way of getting rid of doubts in religion," said Mrs. Beecher Stowe, "is to go and practise what we don't doubt."

In some minds, indeed, there seems to be a constant unrest and struggle after more than is to be

[1] The realization of the greatness of things, and of man's littleness in relation to them, by no means either disproves, or renders improbable, the amazing love of God in redeeming man: though it greatly multiplies the wonder, and condescension, of that love.

found amid the limitations of man's earthly existence.[1] Before such minds can win religious peace, two things appear necessary. (*a*) The realization that all religious knowledge is relative and not absolute; that even the most learned, and most believing, men are not able, in their mortal state, to do more than see through a glass darkly. (*b*) The determination not to approach the difficult and entangled mysteries of the faith, until the simple rudiments have been clearly apprehended and honestly acted out. When men have little light, the best thing they can do is to follow such light as they have, and patiently wait for the larger opening of the day. The manly obedience to a dim and small faith is often rewarded by the gift of a fuller and a brighter faith. In simple fellowship with God, even without deep knowledge of His ways, faith commonly finds both its nourishment and illumination. "Reduce the dogmas necessary to be believed," said Erasmus, "to the smallest possible number: you can do it without danger to the realities of Christianity. On other points either discourage enquiry, or leave every one free to believe what he chooses; then we shall have no more quarrels and religion will take hold on life."

As a sure means of overcoming religious doubt, therefore, I would urge the simplifying of our conceptions of religion. Let the doubter clearly set forth to himself, with honesty and courage, the matters on which he is in doubt; let him carefully enumerate, and then classify them. Let him broadly distinguish between the class of questions which are simply accidental to Christianity, being nothing more than

[1] Cf. Sir Theodore Martin's Introduction to the "Vita Nuova."

the deductions of men; and the class which contains the things essential to Christian discipleship. Nor will it be difficult for the plainest, and least learned among men, to settle for himself, after patient consultation with the New Testament, what things are essential to Christianity, and what are not. Having thus carefully separated between the primary, and secondary, questions on which he doubts; the doubter will, I think, be surprised to find how many are of the latter, and how few, of the former class. Yet of all secondary questions it is obviously permissible to remain in doubt, without forfeiting our Christian discipleship. And if a man finds himself in doubt of any among the few primary questions of the Christian faith; then let him patiently endure the darkness of his doubts, until, in return for his simple obedience, the darkness is divinely dispelled.

And in this connexion I would observe of how great importance it is not to profess to believe anything which is not honestly believed. Whatever faith a man has, however small his portion be, let it be real. Let him not make-believe anything. Make-belief is a deadly foe to true belief. It is essential to the further growth of faith, that the faith we already possess should be honest, and real, and true. Doubt can never be overcome by the pretence and semblance of faith; only by its reality. Till faith is felt to be our very own it has no inspiration, no energy, no strength for battle. The smallest faith which has really taken hold of a man as his own, is better than any amount of faith unappropriated, and unwoven into the very texture of his inmost being.

Second-hand faith—the faith which some one else has, and has bidden us also have—is of no service whatever in the conquest of doubt. David could not fight Goliath in the panoply provided by Saul. And no true doubter can fight his doubts in the armour provided by the authority of somebody else's faith. With nothing but a sling and a few stones we may overcome great giants of doubt: if the sling and stones be our own tried, and accustomed, weapons. Borrowed faith is useless in the serious onslaughts of doubt.

(5) A fifth means of overcoming doubt both in others, and ourselves, is the pursuit and practice of goodness. Goodness is the garden in which faith most beautifully and most fruitfully grows. "Genius," said Alexander Dumas, "cannot explain God; but goodness proves Him." Obedience to conscience is among the most effectual means for developing faith. As the exercise of the physical part of man is beneficial to his moral part; so the exercise of his moral part is beneficial to his spiritual part. Faith is not invariably the reward of goodness; yet goodness is invariably a strong assistance to faith. Vice tends to destroy faith; virtue tends to vivify and strengthen it. The scrupulous regard for conscience, the determination to do right, however unpleasant and difficult the task, brings peace of heart—sometimes a kind of painful peace, yet a real peace—and peace of heart is a good preparation for spiritual belief. In religion the organ of knowledge is less the intellect than the heart. Reason is a noble faculty, yet is it only one among the many faculties of man. It is, moreover, the faculty which

apprehends the evidences of religion, rather than religion itself. What faith requires is not metaphysical argument so much as the help of moral goodness. The knowledge of God is best attained by the keeping of His commandments. To men who imitate God, God frequently unfolds Himself. In seeking goodness men generally find God Himself. For the good, though sometimes unconsciously to themselves, are in fellowship with God; and, in the end, fellowship with God, however unconscious at first, leads to that definite apprehension of God which is of the essence of faith.

The best way of understanding religion is to practise it. Do the works and you shall know of the doctrine. "Faith does not depend on a long process of thought. How few indeed can think their way to God—perhaps none by the logical intellect alone. He reveals Himself to the simple. Religion can never be proved by argument, though argument is necessary and inevitable, the mind being what it is. It can only be proved by living—by taking it into our hearts—by every little victory we gain over evil. Very difficult and patient is the process by which Christian reality has to be grasped. There is no short cut to it. One must toil. Yet in the simplest act of loving self-surrender there is the germ of all faith, the essence of all lasting religion."[1] The realization of this truth—the truth that a life of obedience to conscience, of devotion to goodness, of readiness to sacrifice self for the sake of others, is essential to the development of faith, and is one of the surest means for overcoming religious doubt.

[1] "David Grieve," pp. 206, 352, 384.

Moreover, as the practice of goodness is an effectual means of overcoming doubt in one's self; so the consistent, and self-forgetting exhibition of this practice, is a powerful means of diminishing religious doubt in others. A fruitful cause of religious doubt is the poverty of religious practice among professing Christians. Nothing commends Christianity more favourably to religious doubters than the kindness, and forbearance, and devotion of Christian professors. And the more consistent the profession, the more beneficent is the influence. Among the clergy, *e.g.*, the good effect of endeavouring to practise what they preach is very great. Many a humble minister, by the beauty and excellency of his life, has done more to banish doubt from the world, than eminent orators whose conversation and conduct are out of harmony with their eloquence. It would be indeed a sorry sermon which contained no ideals higher than the preacher himself had already attained; none the less, the preacher should be felt, both in word and deed, to be striving after the ideals of his sermons, else his preaching, instead of diminishing doubt, greatly fosters it. If men who preach against worldliness and uncharitableness on Sunday are found on week-days to be themselves both worldly and uncharitable; how can they hope to win those who hear them? Preaching, without practising, not only makes doubt, but arms it with stings of satirical truth; whereas the manifestation of an earnest struggle to practise one's preaching strips doubt of its satire, and tends to kill the very doubt itself. Divergences of religious opinion are not half so deadly to faith, as divergence between profession and practice: the former are felt

to be natural, the latter unnatural. Even when the exhibition of goodness is not an irresistible inducement to belief; it turns the balance in favour of belief, and not against it.

(6) Another help in overcoming doubt is the confession, with all candour, by intelligent Christians of the innumerable difficulties left unsolved even by faith. The pretence that Christianity solves all the riddles of the human mind and heart, is not only unjust to Christianity, in none of whose Scriptures are any such pretences set forth; but is also a common source of religious doubt. It is the part of wisdom to abandon this pretence; and to frankly confess that many things are, for the present, altogether inexplicable even unto faith. Manfully, and healthily, and modestly, to confess the difficulties of belief is, to intelligent and reflecting persons, one of the greatest helps in overcoming doubt. Most men feel at heart a want of God; a longing for the sense of His gracious presence. They are not atheists. They are conscious of some dim belief; and perhaps have more real belief than they are confessedly conscious of. They would not send their children to an atheistic school, or on any account deprive them of instruction in religion. Not conscious of much faith in themselves, they yet desire to see more faith in their children; and this very desire is an evidence of their belief in belief. And yet faith for them is difficult. They feel themselves surrounded by darkness and mystery. They are as infants in the night; as children on a pathless mountain, enveloped in cloud. They yearn for the path, and cry for the light. Their very doubts are often a form of intense

longing to believe; and yet of determination to believe only what they think is true.

Now under circumstances of this kind every form of unreality is doubly dangerous. To refined and sensitive natures a pretended assurance in things not sure is repellent. Clumsy attempts at demonstrating the indemonstrable, or explaining the inexplicable, only result in deepening the darkness, and intensifying the doubts, of intelligent men. It is better far to acknowledge that many things are hard, and some impossible, to be understood in the present life; that there are mysteries in the ordering of things impenetrable even by the vision of faith; and that as reason is not infallible, neither is faith all-seeing.

Religion, like all other causes, greatly loses by pretending to be wiser than, in reality, it is; and greatly gains by confessing the limitations of its knowledge. When we frankly confess our ignorance of things we do not know, we create in others a willingness to credit us with actually knowing such things as we humbly profess to know. Religious teachers have largely forfeited their claim to the attention of intelligent persons by pretending to define the indefinable; to unfold all mysteries and explain all problems; and by not freely confessing the incapacity, even of faith, to illumine every darkness and dissolve every perplexity. When religious teachers begin bravely to confess how many difficulties religion leaves unexplained, and how great are the questions unanswered by revelation, they will have taken a long step towards the conquest of religious doubt.

On the other hand, if it is necessary, in the interests of truth, to frankly acknowledge the difficulties left unravelled by faith ; it is no less necessary to acknowledge, with equal candour, the vastness of the difficulties attending doubt. In our Sixth Chapter we saw that the difficulties besetting religious doubt are simply immense and apparently insuperable. The realization of the number and greatness of these difficulties is a powerful assistance to faith ; by helping to shew that if the difficulties both on the side of faith, and the side of doubt, be fairly weighed, faith is intellectually quite as defensible as doubt. Let the difficulties of both faith and doubt be fearlessly laid bare for frank discussion in the honest and determined quest for truth ; let a fair and just balance between these difficulties be struck, and homage gladly paid to Truth on whichever side it may be found, and faith will find itself no loser.

It is only when we ourselves are true to the Truth that we can expect the Truth to be true to us. Yet how much one-sidedness there commonly is both in religious faith and religious doubt ! Believers seldom read books leaning towards doubt ; doubters seldom read books witnessing to faith. Each class alike looks at questions solely from its own point of view, and so a great gulf is fixed between faith and doubt ; to the deepening of doubt and the sundering of reason from faith. Faith would be more reasonable if it came more often into contact with doubt ; and doubt more tender if it came more often into contact with faith. In the serious pursuit of truth neither reticence nor concealment is of the slightest service. It is no remedy for doubt to condemn it to silence. Silence

only leaves doubt smouldering; and concealment enervates faith. "Doubt," says Professor Jowett, "comes in at the window, when Inquiry is denied at the door."[1] Rational faith has nothing to fear from freedom of thought. It is mere cowardice not to dare to think one's self; or to seek to restrain the liberty of free thought in others. And Christianity has no respect for cowardice of any kind. Christianity means courage: courage born of confidence in the spirit of liberty and the God of truth. To shirk enquiry fosters doubt; to invite enquiry strengthens faith.

(7) Another strong aid in overcoming religious doubt is the manifestation of spirituality in the Christian Church. No small part of religious doubt, indeed, is the result of the lack of spirituality in the common conceptions of religion. Erastian notions of religion; notions which connect religion too closely with the State, and with secular authority, commonly produce religious indifference and religious doubt. It is a beautiful idea—the idea which represents the State as the body of the Commonwealth, and the Church as its spirit; which depicts the State as the Church in the performance of its secular functions, and the Church as the State in the performance of its spiritual functions: which declares that, as in each individual man, there is the physical part (the expression of the man towards the world) and the spiritual part (the expression of the same man towards God); so in the collective Commonwealth, there is the State, which is the secular expression of the Commonwealth, and the Church which is its spiritual expression. But beautiful as the idea is, yet in the carrying forth of

[1] "Interpretation of Scripture," p. 45.

the idea into practice there is the constant peril of the State secularizing the Church, instead of the Church spiritualizing the State. And if any Church become secularized; if its magnates become politicians, and its prophets partisans; if its priests receive reward for merely secular services; if instead of rising to the height of Christianizing the State, the Church sinks down to the level of a State Department—such a Church is a fruitful seminary of religious doubt; because wherever religion is secular, doubt will be prolific. It is only the religion which is deeply spiritual that can satisfy the hunger of doubt, or bring calm to its unrest and its storms.

Again: if religion be nothing more than a selfish desire for personal salvation; a prudential insurance against hell; a hope of advantage in heaven—how can good men continue to respect it? And if they cease to respect it, they will speedily proceed to doubt the divinity both of its authority and origin. That religion is a form of wisdom, and of very prudential wisdom, cannot be denied; but it is something much more than prudence. It is spiritual adoration of God, spiritual enthusiasm for man. It is the self-sacrificing wisdom which wins life by losing it; which loses the old self in devotion to others, and receives a new self from the Holy Spirit of God. It is not often that self-losing faith is greatly troubled with doubts. Doubt is born from a self-loving, not from a self-losing, religion.

(8) Closely allied to the importance of simplicity and spirituality in religion is the need for liberality and largeness. "The narrow notions of all Churches," said Archbishop Tenison, "have been their ruin."

"One great secret of Christ's influence," said Bishop Fraser, "was that He turned men's thoughts away from the discussions of the Rabbis:" discussions concerning mint and anise and cummin, to the neglect of justice and mercy and truth. Rabbinism, Scholasticism, Casuistical theology invariably tend towards narrowness, and narrowness is a fruitful source of doubt. Not, indeed, that all the questions debated by casuistic theologians are unimportant questions. Some of them are practical questions; questions intimately associated with the conduct of daily life. Others are questions of definite doctrine; and definite doctrine (what is often undervalued as dogma) is, in some degree, necessary both to the organization of Churches, and to the consistency and stability of Christian life. Churches without doctrine are like animals without backbone; lacking in power, and unable to stand erect. The individual Christian life is greatly assisted by clear perceptions of definite doctrine. As good living is the best ornament of good doctrine; so good doctrine is a strong support of good living.

It is not, therefore, dogmatism which, of itself, produces doubt; but dogmatism dissociated from practice, dogmatism exaggerated and exclusive. Doctrine cannot be too definite so long as it is charitable and comprehensive. The mysteries of the faith are often indefinable, inscrutable, dim. But the doctrinal statements of these mysteries—in so far as they lie within the scope of statement—should be clear, definite, concise: because concise statement often carries with it convincing power. Still it should be manifest that the aim of the doctrine is to assist

and include; not to exclude and hinder. No true Creed is less large and liberal than Christ Himself.

And if, in the struggle to overcome doubt, it is important that doctrine should be interpenetrated with charity; it is equally important, in the discussions of doctrine, that two cardinal principles should always be remembered and acted on. First, that polemics waged in a polemical spirit are useless, if not injurious, to religion. "Polemics may reduce an adversary to silence, may often humiliate him, may sometimes irritate him, but will never convince him."[1] The most perfect polemics were the polemics of Christ. His method of discussion was either to answer a question by asking another question, His own question always containing the germ of the answer to His critic's enquiry, as in the instance of the question concerning tribute-money;[2] or to meet questions founded in error by lifting the subject to some higher plane of truth, commonly of spiritual truth, as in the instance of the woman with seven husbands;[3] or to appeal from the entanglements of dialectic to the tribunal of conscience, as in the instance of the woman taken in the act of adultery;[4] or to draw attention away from theories and rumours and misgivings to the plain facts of His history, as in the instances when the Baptist, or His disciples, or His enemies questioned Him concerning His Messiahship.[5]

This latter method points, indeed, to the second principle which must control religious polemics,

[1] Huc's "Thibet," ii. 66. [2] Matt. xxii. 20.
[3] Matt. xxii. 29–33. [4] John viii. 7. [5] Matt. xi. 5.

before they can be of genuine service to faith, viz. the recognition of the overwhelming importance of the historic facts of Christianity, as contra-distinguished from opinions concerning those facts. It is the facts of the life of Christ, and the power of those facts to answer to such facts of our own consciousness as the sense of sin, the need of pardon, the craving for peace, the hope of immortality—which, in all discussions on Christianity, should be kept clearly to the front; and debated in a large, liberal, truth-seeking spirit. The facts of the Gospel are vastly more important than any theories whatever concerning them. It is in religion as in all other things appertaining to the trinal life of man. In the life of man's body, the facts of food and raiment are immensely more important than any theories concerning the physiological action of food, or the heat-conserving powers of raiment. Not that the theories have not both great interest and great value; yet the truth remains that, by food and raiment, a man's body may be preserved in health and strength and comfort, without adopting the particular theories of this, or that, school of doctors and physiologists.

Similarly with the soul of man. The light of reason, the joys of love, the monitions of conscience, the power of will, may all be exercised and made use of and enjoyed, to the great growth of soul-development; without adopting any of the complex and contradictory theories of the source of reason, the nature of affection, the constitution of conscience, the origin of will. The facts of reason, affection, conscience, will, are plain facts in the life of man's soul. Speculations in theories concerning these

psychological facts are a deep and curious intellectual delight; they are, moreover, not altogether barren of result upon conduct and practice. Yet, after all, the principal thing in the production of soul-happiness, and soul-elevation, is not speculating and theorizing on the phenomena of the soul; but honest obedience to the light of reason, a pure reverence for love, submission to conscience, the development and the discipline of will.

It is just the same with the life of man's spirit. In the spiritual life of man, the facts of the Gospel—its emphasis of sin, its insistence on self-sacrifice, its encouragement of prayer and worship, its sacramental institutions, its records of the Christ, its promise of the Holy Spirit, its revelation of the return of Christ to judge the world—these facts are of inconceivably greater moment than any theories regarding them, however interesting or valuable the theories may be. Man's salvation depends on the spiritual assimilation of spiritual facts, not on adopting any particular school of speculation regarding the facts. By over-indulgence in doctrinal speculations, and especially by heated debate on these speculations, men may easily get involved in the meshes of doubt; just as men may injure their health by morbid ruminations over theories of health. And as, in the latter case, the recovery of health depends on physical facts, and is assisted by the abandonment of physiological speculations; so, in reference to religious doubt, its remedy is generally assured by the study and assimilation of the religious facts of the Gospel, combined with the wholesome neglect, for a time at least, of all theological speculations concerning them.

Moreover, the study of facts has a tendency diametrically opposite to the debate on theories; a tendency which, of itself, is exceedingly favourable to the diminution of doubt. For debate on theories tends towards exclusion and bitterness; whereas the study of facts tends towards lowliness of heart, and largeness of mind; and few conditions are so favourable to the development of faith, as largeness of mind and lowliness of heart.

(9) It is also well deserving of note that the learning of religion is like the learning of everything else: it presupposes and requires the co-operation of the learner. Neither magical nor mechanical methods are of any service in overcoming doubt, and developing faith. The magic of mere authority may produce silence in the soul—the silence of the spiritual slave, a silence born of submission and dread—a silence altogether unworthy of redeemed and emancipated humanity. But submissive silence to the usurpations of authority, however appropriate to the magical character of superstition, is out of all keeping with the free faith of the Gospel. Chains and drugs are not the recognized instruments of the Gospel. The Gospel is not a Gospel of either mechanism or magic. It is the Gospel for the entire trinity of each individual man: spirit, soul, and body. The whole of each man's nature groans and travails in pain together for redemption by the Gospel; and not least of all is the travail felt by the two soul-faculties of reason and will. Yet how can reason be redeemed by compulsory suppression, or the will redeemed by enforced torpidity and quiescence? To deny either to reason, or will, the full plenitude of their rightful

power—the power, *i.e.*, which recognizes the claims, and the harmony, of the complete nature of man—is not to redeem these faculties, but to rob them of their rights. Better far are all the pains and perplexities of religious doubt; than the superstitious bondage of reason, and the slavish suppression of the will.

One great difference, indeed, between false and true remedies for religious doubt is to be found in the difference of authority denied, or assigned, to the faculties of reason and will. False remedies subjugate both reason and will by the exercise of ecclesiastical dominion: true remedies develop the reason, and hallow the will, by spiritualizing both. False remedies say to both reason and will; "Humble yourselves before the footstool of authority." True remedies say; "Honour all good and holy teachers, but let every faculty of man claim its own freedom, and develop its own power; remembering that the power of each part should be proportionately related to the strength of the whole, and the freedom of each faculty be in harmony with the perfect freedom of all the rest." Not less reason, but reason spiritualized; not less will, but will spiritualized, is one of the true remedies for religious doubt.

The importance of the will in all things pertaining to the education, and the happiness, of mankind cannot be over-estimated. Few things distinguish men more conspicuously from each other than the direction, and power, of will. It is the power of will which gives vitality to every form of difficult and enduring effort; and makes the difference between invincible men and men easily defeated. It is the direction of will which determines a man's whole tone

and character. A will inclined downward makes a down-grade man; a will mounting upward makes an exalted man. A will deaf to reason makes an obstinate man; a will co-operating with reason a rational man; a will guided by conscience a moral man; a will directed by the Spirit of God a religious man.

In matters of faith and doubt the direction and power of the will are of altogether immeasurable influence. To will against religion is a much more serious matter than to reason against it. For to all arguments against religion other arguments of at least equal force may be adduced. But arguments are of little avail against the will. Indeed it is no uncommon thing for the will to be intensified in its opposition to a cause by the overpowering energy and weight of arguments favourable to the cause. No answer to objections, however rational and forcible, can overcome objections, if they are supported by the will. An answer can often subdue the opposing will by its softness and gentleness; but rarely by the sheer might of its logic. In religion, although men may be persuaded towards faith by logic, when the will is unbiassed; yet no man was ever driven from his doubts by logic against the resistance of his will. Hence arises the very great importance of the will co-operating with the reason in all matters of religious doubt, and the equally great importance of conducting all debates on religious questions with charity and gentleness of heart.

The higher we rise in the scale of being the greater grows the importance of the education of the will. Low forms of life have apparently no will that can be distinguished from one, or other, of the physical

appetites. The entire life of the lowest animals is apparently conditioned and determined by the physical senses. But as we ascend to the higher grades of being we begin to discover indications of will, operating through the channels of affection, in antagonism to the selfishness of physical desire; as in the instances of the painful, yet willing, devotion of dogs to their masters, and animals to their offspring. And when, in mounting the ladder of life, we reach man himself, the summit of animal being, we find the power of will, as distinguished from mere physical appetite, both clear and great. The will of man is able not only to fight against, but actually to conquer and subdue, several of the appetites of the body. Even such necessary desires as those for food and sleep are, in man, greatly under the control of the will. And what is altogether amazing in reference to the power of will in man is the obvious fact that it is not only strong enough to subdue physical appetites; it is also strong enough to defy reason and trample on conscience. In man, will is the master power: capable of reducing to subjection all other faculties both of body and soul.

And even in the spiritual province of the kingdom of man, the power of the will is exceedingly strong. For, it must be borne in mind, that although the kingdom of each individual man is composed of three distinct provinces, yet no single one of the three provinces is independent of the other two. Each province is not only related to the others, but vitally dependent on them.[1] In man's present state of being, the body depends on the soul for direction,

[1] Cf. pp. 38–40.

the soul on the body for development; the spirit depends on the soul for nourishment, and the soul on the spirit for hallowing. And in the nourishment of the spirit, the will plays a momentous part. For it rests with the will either to refuse, or supply, to the spirit the necessaries of food and light and exercise. It is only by permission of the will that the spirit of man can obtain the exercise of self-renouncing prayer, or the light shining through the firmament of revelation, or the food contained in the Eucharistic sacrament. From all these sources of spiritual health, and spiritual light, and spiritual food, it is in the power of the will to keep back the spirit of man. As the will can resist and defy reason, so also can it resist and defy revelation. It can even keep man from approaching Christ. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life."[1]

Why the will of man should be endowed with such enormous power, power involving responsibility equally enormous, we do not stay to enquire; perhaps all such enquiries are vain to man in this first stage of his existence; but this at least seems evident, that inasmuch as the will possesses so great a dominion in the kingdom of man—sitting indeed on the throne of his being—it is of both first, and last, importance that the will should be carefully trained and enlightened. The education of the will is of greater moment than the education of any other faculty in man. In religion particularly the will exercises a subtle and incalculable influence. Neither intellectual, nor spiritual knowledge is, of itself, full religious knowledge. Full religious knowledge is knowledge vitalized

[1] John v. 40, Οὐ θέλετε ἐλθεῖν πρός με.

by the will of man acting under the direction of the Will of God. The cultivation of faith largely depends on the power and tendency of the will. And in battling against religious doubt no final victory can be gained without both the co-operation, and the consecration of the will.

(10) Moreover the will is not only a great power in man; it is also a greatly jealous power. It naturally resents control. Yet the very essence of religion is control: the control of the will of man by the will of God. Naturally, therefore, the will of man is adverse to religion. Doubt is often a kind of delight to the will, because the tendency of doubt is to dissolve the restraints of religion; to loose the curbs and give the reins to will. And so it comes to pass that whatever ministers to religious doubt is more congenial, more welcome, to the will than things which minister to the restraining growth of faith.

Hence it is that books favourable to doubt are more eagerly read than books favourable to faith; and speakers who urge criticisms, damaging to religion, are listened to with a more ready ear than speakers who contend on behalf of religion. Hence, too, many pleas are admitted as valid arguments against the faith which, but for the prevenient intervention of the will, would be clearly seen to be largely irrelevant: such pleas, *e.g.*, as the inconsistencies of many Christian professors, and the narrow dogmatisms of many Christian teachers. But if the will, in its natural jealousy of religious restraint, had not first given a bias to the reason, the reason would plainly have apprehended the unreasonableness of judging religion by either its faithless, or its foolish,

professors. Conscience, too, unwarped by the will, would have condemned the injustice of all such judgments.

Seeing, then, that there is great danger, owing to the jealousy of religious restraint natural to our wills, of giving a partial and unjust judgment in matters of religion, our plain moral duty is to lend a very patient ear to all that can be urged on behalf of religion; to hear and read fully as much *for* the faith as *against* the faith; to penetrate below the superficial dogmatisms of foolish teachers to the authentic declarations in the New Testament of the fundamental principles of the Gospel; not to confine our conversations and companionships exclusively to the circle of those who doubt, but to cultivate also the conversation and companionship of those who have made a genuine trial of the Christian faith. In the story of their simple experience—the tale of how Christianity has withheld them in temptation, sustained them in sorrow, given them rest in tumult and weariness—we shall often find an answer to many of our questions and the complete solution of many of our doubts. In the vitalizing atmosphere of the simple experiences of a loving Christian friend, men often gain greater power of faith than from all the arguments of all the doctors of all the Schools. When Rousseau was asked what he considered to be the greatest of all arguments in favour of Christianity: he simply replied, "My mother."

(11) Religious doubt also not unfrequently arises from over-absorption in pursuits and interests outside religion. When doubts originate from this source nothing short of the relaxation of the intensity of

over-absorption, together with the devotion of some part of the emancipated energies to religion, will suffice for the nourishment and growth of faith. No part of man's triune nature can be robust without both food and exercise. The body, famished and motionless, sinks into decrepitude; the soul, unfed and stagnant, loses the power of activity; and similarly the spirit, if denied its proper nourishment and exercise, grows weak and incapable of movement. And by consequence, faith which is one chief faculty of the spirit, becomes feeble and lethargic.

Religious doubt is thus, in many instances, nothing more than the natural result of the starvation and inactivity of the spiritual faculties, owing to over-absorption in non-spiritual occupations. It is the natural dimness consequent on denying to the spirit full access to heavenly light; the natural weakness consequent on refusing to the spirit its due proportion of exercise and food. In the fifth chapter of this book[1] we saw that the amount of vital energy, or force, in each individual man is limited; and that it is impossible to assign to any single department of man's triune nature an undue and over-abundant amount of energy, without proportionally depriving some other department of the energy rightly due as its share. If too much energy be spent, *e.g.*, on the body, too little is left for soul and spirit; if too much on the soul, too little remains for body and spirit; if too much on the spirit, too little remains for body and soul.

Probably the amount of vital energy in no two

[1] Cf. pp. 150, *et seq.*

men is exactly equal; probably also the direction in which the greatest amount of force is to be spent does not lie wholly at the nod of each individual will—being partly determined and conditioned by heredity, environment, opportunity, unexpected circumstance, and the like. Some men are born poets or orators; others statesmen, lawgivers, discoverers, athletes, theologians; some are born with a distinct trend in one direction, others in another; and this hereditary disposition, whatever its origin, appropriates to itself the lion's share of the whole energy possessed by any individual. Then, too, every man is born with his own individual personality; in the mould of that personality his character is formed; according to his character, the motions of his will are largely directed; and upon the decree of his will very greatly depends the manner of the distribution, among the three several parts of his constitution, of his whole sum of energy.

It is from this diversity in the amount of force possessed by each individual; and from the diversity of congenital, and other forms of, bias in the distribution of their particular force; that the useful, and pleasing, varieties of human characters and human careers proceed: varieties which are apparently infinite. If all men had the same amount of vital energy, and distributed their energy in equal proportions along identical lines, then all men would be exactly equal and exactly alike. Mankind would be one monotonous Man; looking alike, thinking alike, acting alike. Instead of the sublime unity of a multifarious brotherhood, there would be the oppressive uniformity of a single, though multiplied, man.

The joy of variety, the progress by emulation, the productiveness of divided labour, the pleasures of contrast, the exchange of thought, the delights of mutual recreation, would all disappear; but for the diversity, both in amount and distribution, of the vital force belonging to the manifold personalties of mankind. Nothing could be more clearly, and conclusively, evident, as part of the design of the Creator of mankind, than the avoidance of monotony, and the purpose of variety, among men.

The right distribution of the force in a man, therefore, does not imply either an equal distribution among the three parts of his entire nature; or an identical distribution by all men, among their several parts, alike; seeing that such a distribution would run clean contrary to the law of diversity impressed by Nature on the character and pursuits of men. Great concentration of personal force, and deep absorption in a single pursuit, are necessary to excellence and progress. Nearly all inventors and discoverers have been absorbed and concentrated men. Sir Isaac Newton tells us that his habit was to keep his mind constantly intent on whatever problem he had in hand; "to turn his thoughts perpetually that way." If Charles Darwin had not given himself up exclusively to the study of Natural History he would have gained in all-roundness, but the world would have lost the results of his concentration. Clearness and brightness of thought largely depend on habits of patient and vivid attention; and keen attention implies the consumption of vital energy or force. And if much keen attention is devoted to one particular object, or pursuit, less energy remains for

consumption on other subjects; as is shewn by the fact that men who are very great in one direction are often not great in other directions. Great athletes are seldom great scholars, great classics seldom great mathematicians, great artists seldom great statesmen, or great statesmen seldom great poets; and so on. The truth is that men are born with different tendencies; and both their time, and force, are strictly limited. Hence some men are great in one way, and others in another; and all greatness of every sort depends on the concentration of energy and the devotion of time to one subject more than to others. And if *all* a man's time and *all* a man's energy be devoted to one subject, or pursuit, he will gradually lose all interest in, and all desire for, other subjects and other pursuits.

This law of the limitation, not only of every man's time, but of every man's energy; together with the dwarfing and weakening of other capacities by the over-development of any single faculty exclusively; is a law which operates with conspicuous power in the realm of religion. No man can be really religious who does not devote time and energy to religion; any more than a man can be intellectual who gives no time to thought, or athletic who gives no energy to exercise. And if *all* a man's energy, and *all* his time, be devoted to pursuits which are not religious, however innocent and laudable in themselves the pursuits may be; nothing can be more sure than that such a man will ultimately grow indifferent and doubtful towards religion. His faculty for religion will be cramped, and enfeebled, through atrophy and neglect.

The consideration of this law confirms the assumption, which on other grounds is also valid, that, although man is composed of three distinct departments of being, yet no single department is independent of the other two; no one is cut off from the others; each depends on all and all on each. For the amount of a man's force is not divided among the three elements of his triune personality in separate portions; so that he is obliged, by the unchangeable necessities of his constitution, to bestow a given portion on his body, and a given portion on his soul, and a given portion on his spirit. To a large extent the distribution of a man's force lies at the disposal of his will. Not indeed wholly; because no man can wholly decide for himself—without reference to heredity and environment, to destiny and the sovereignty of God—what proportion of his force shall go to physical stature, and what proportion to psychical development, and what proportion to spiritual insight and spiritual power. To some extent all these things lie beyond our control; neither by taking thought, nor exerting will, can we determine them. And to such extent as their determination lies beyond our control it is impossible, according to the very nature of justice, that we should be held responsible for them.

But although to some extent the disposition of our time, and the distribution of energy, lie beyond our control; yet to a large extent also they come within our control, and under the sovereign disposition of our will. And within the whole range of this extent, we are responsible both for the disposition of our time, and the distribution of our energy. In a large

measure a man can apportion his time and energy to whichever department of his triune nature he may will to apportion it. According to his own will he can bestow a large or small portion on his body, a large or small portion on his soul, a large or small portion on his spirit. And for the method and proportion of this distribution he is responsible; by this distribution also the development, or atrophy, of the different departments of his constitution is decided.

According to what principle, then, we proceed to ask, ought this distribution to be measured and controlled? Clearly it is contrary to God's law of diversity,[1] that all men should give the same time, and the same energy, to just the same things. The Bible itself discourages all attempts at such a monotonous and uniform distribution. It tells us that there are diversities of gifts, and differences of administration, and diversities of operations in the physical, psychical and spiritual universes alike.[2] And a man's obvious duty is not to neglect, but to stir up and cultivate his special gift; whatever that gift may be. The very fact of possessing a gift in any particular direction, may well be accepted as a sign that our duty is to develop, and train, that particular gift. A man's energy can be best utilized in the direction for which by nature he is best adapted. If a man has some distinct capacity, say for engineering or poetry or scientific research or theological pursuits, it would be a clear waste of energy to devote himself to some other pursuit for which he is wholly lacking in capacity; and to neglect the pursuit for which he has

[1] Cf. pp. 133, *et seq.*
[2] 1 Cor. xii., *passim*.

peculiar aptitude. To do this would be to abandon success and solicit failure.

In guarding ourselves, therefore, against the dangers of over-absorption in any particular pursuit, we must not lose sight of either the pleasure, or advantages, of the individualization of every human life. Individual gifts both claim, and deserve, special culture; and special culture implies the appropriation of the lion's share of the energy belonging to any particular man.

Still, that man is not rightly developed who is developed only in one department of his triune nature, or in one single faculty of any department. To the perfection of every individual man a certain harmony of development in all the constituent portions of his composite being is essential. We do not ask a cripple to waste the energies of his nature on attempting to become an athlete. None the less we feel that, however finely framed a man's body is, yet if he concentrates his whole energy on the cultivation of his physical nature, he is a most incomplete and imperfect man. Similarly we do not ask a dunce to waste his energy on endeavouring to become intellectual; none the less we feel that, however magnificent a man's intellect may be, yet if he concentrates his whole energy exclusively on the development of his brain-power, although he should swell into an intellectual giant, he would be utterly out of proportion when regarded as a man. And, in like manner, although it is not to be expected that all men should be equally spiritual; yet, considering that the spirit is an integral part of the triune constitution of man, no one, however finely and magnificently

developed in body and soul, is harmoniously complete, who neglects or omits the cultivation of his spiritual nature. No part or faculty of man should work in isolation from the rest. In the cultivation of the harmony, and wholeness, of each man's being; every part should work in co-operation with the rest, and the welfare of the whole should be the sovereign rule governing the development of each particular part. The body should not be developed at the expense of the soul, or the soul at the expense of the spirit. Absorption in physical things should not too greatly distract our energy from attention to psychical things; nor engrossment in things which are seen lead to negligence of things unseen. The whole man will move forward best when all his parts move forward together.

The true principle, therefore, for regulating the amount of energy at our disposal would seem to be the specialization of individual gifts; yet not without due and just regard to the right proportion, and harmony, of each department of our trinal nature. No single faculty should be so disproportionately developed, by isolated over-absorption in its own sphere of labour, as to injure the health of any other part, or sacrifice the welfare of the entire and harmonious man.

In carrying this principle into practice not only should the harmony of the whole man be maintained, but the proportionate worth of each part of man's nature should be justly esteemed. In man's threefold constitution there is a part which is animal, a part which is human, and a part which is divine. The human part is the middle term between the two; on

the one side related to the animal, on the other penetrated with the divine. Man's animal part is his body, his human part his soul, his divine part his spirit. In this hierarchy of his trinal nature man's body is of lowest, and his spirit of highest, worth; while the soul is of more worth than the body, but of less worth than the spirit. In determining, therefore, on an equitable scale the amount of time, and energy, rightly due to each several part of man's nature not only the harmony, but the hierarchy, of that nature should be remembered and appraised. According to this rule over-absorption in physical pleasures and pursuits—in things, *i.e.*, pertaining to the necessities, appetites, comforts, and luxuries of the body—would seem to be the most guilty form of over-absorption. Next in degree of blame, and guilt, would come over-absorption in psychical things, *i.e.* things intellectual and emotional, not excluding energy wasted in casuistries and morbid anxieties of conscience. And the least, yet certainly a distinct, degree of guilt belongs to over-absorption in spiritual interests, to the neglect of either body or mind.

The observance of the threefold hierarchy in man's constitution, and the determination to cultivate each order in that hierarchy in due proportion, and harmonious relationship, to the other two orders, is one of the surest and most powerful of all helps in overcoming religious doubt. The over-development of any part of man's nature implies the under-development of some other part; and under-development implies the resultant atrophy of the neglected part; and this atrophy implies weakness, and weakness is followed by instability, and instability by wavering

and uncertainty in the functions of the atrophied faculty. And when the atrophied faculty is the spiritual faculty, wavering and uncertainty are practically the same thing as religious doubt; for religious doubt is double-mindedness in religion — double-mindedness arising from dimness and feebleness of religious vision. And when the vision is weak, the pathway seems uncertain; and spiritual uncertainty is the chief characteristic of religious doubt.

(12) Thus we arrive at what is by far the most important of all the requisites necessary for winning the victory over religious doubt. This requisite is the assiduous culture of the spiritual faculty. Without nourishment and exercise the spiritual faculty is weak, and spiritual weakness engenders religious doubt. With exercise and nourishment the spiritual faculty gains strength, and the strengthening of the spiritual faculty is the sure forerunner of victory over religious doubt; if by 'doubt' we remember that we mean; not doubtfulness concerning the religious opinions of Christendom, but dimness of religious perception, instability and uncertainty in the realization for ourselves of God, and of the spiritualities both of this world and the world to come.

If the spirit be, as we have seen,[1] a distinct element in the triple compound of man—distinct in the sense in which we apply distinctness to either body or soul—then it follows that nurture and education are as essential to the full development of the spirit as to the full development of either body or soul. And inasmuch as the spirit is of even higher quality, approximating more nearly to the divine, than the

[1] Chapter II., pp. 35–40.

soul, the education of the spirit is even more important than the education of the soul; and *à fortiori* more important than the education of the body. Yet how few persons either realize the necessity, or apply themselves to the task, of spiritual culture; steady, methodical, persistent, spiritual culture. And, as a consequence, how many there are whose spiritual faculties are weak and flabby and dim; to whom miracles seem an intellectual absurdity, and suffering part of a hopeless moral chaos, and immortality a speculation, and God Himself little else than a hypothesis.

The causes of this general absence of spiritual culture are mainly two. The first springs from man himself; the second from external circumstances, particularly the circumstance of the rarity of a methodized knowledge of the laws and operations of the spiritual universe.

(*a*) First, man himself is naturally indisposed to spiritual culture; and this for various reasons. Man, in his present stage of existence, is powerfully conditioned by his body. Bodily needs, bodily comforts, bodily pleasures, even also bodily discomforts and bodily pains, claim and command a large share of his energy and attention. So potent is the might of the physical element in man's present constitution, that it not uncommonly overtops, and overpowers, every psychical element of the soul; trampling on reason, smothering conscience, sensualizing the rational will. Mortal man, *i.e.* man under his present carnal and material condition of being, finds that of all the parts of his nature to which he can give energy and attention, with least difficulty and most immediate

satisfaction, is his bodily part. To cultivate health and strength and pleasure of body, even when this culture implies effort and restraint as it generally does; is yet the easiest of all effort, and the least irksome of all restraints.

Next to the body, in the order of increasing difficulty, comes the education of the soul. The education of reason, emotion, conscience,[1] imagination, and will, is a very much more arduous task than the education of the purely sensible faculties in man; involving greater labour, and more severe restraint. Yet the education of the soul is powerfully assisted by the body; as well as by present, immediate considerations of a visible and tangible sort. The body itself gains, in comparative immunity from exhaustion and fatigue, by yielding to the restraints of reason and conscience. Then, too, the fruits of the education of reason, and conscience, and will, are reaped without long delay; in the harvests of visible prosperity, and social esteem, and the comradeship of high-minded men. The efforts made in educating the soul have not long to wait for their reward; often a visible and tangible reward, a reward here and now. And the prospect of the reward, and above all the visible tokens surrounding us of the rewards enjoyed by our fellow-men, sustain and stimulate us to put forth any efforts, and endure any deprivations, in the labour of educating the soul.

It is far otherwise with the education of the spirit. The education of the spirit is, indeed, by no means lacking in rewards and joys; but they are altogether

[1] Conscience towards man is psychical; conscience towards God is spiritual.

different in character from the joys of body, and the rewards of soul; and are much longer in coming. The joys of bodily education are sensible and immediate. The rewards of soul-culture are manifest to the world, and win the praise of men. But the joys of spirit-culture are very slow in coming; and its rewards are mostly secret, within the deepest recesses of man's trinal nature, known only to those who receive them, and to God Who bestows them. The world in general cares not overmuch for the prizes of spiritual culture. It does not desire them for itself; it does not applaud them in others. In the toil of spiritual education, therefore, we receive but little of the stimulating encouragement awarded by our fellow-men to perseverance in physical, or intellectual, or moral, education. And this absence of public encouragement, this sense of loneliness in the pursuit of spiritual development, especially at the beginning of the spiritual life, is a powerful and serious hindrance.

Moreover both the body and the soul of man are wont to rebel against the growth of his spiritual power. For the subjection of the body, and the submission of the soul, are conditions essentially antecedent to the development of the spirit. The spiritual nature of man can germinate, and blossom, and bring forth fruit, only in an atmosphere penetrated with the heat, and light, of God's conscious presence. Without this divine light and heat, spiritual growth is stunted. But God's conscious presence implies submission to His holy rule; and neither man's physical, nor psychic, faculties are over-ready to recognize the Divine supremacy.

Naturally they are at enmity against the law of God ; and desire to be a law unto themselves. And so when the spirit, for the sake of its own culture, seeks to establish God on the throne of our being, body and soul rebel against the enthronization ; and fight against every effort to subdue all things under the feet of God. Jealous of their own authority, body and soul resent all attempts of the spirit to set a lord over them ; even though the lord be the Lord their GOD.

But more than this. Not only does the spirit receive from the world no encouragement in the labours of its own education ; not only is it hindered at every step by the jealousies of body and soul ; but the processes of spiritual education are generally most unwelcome to the "natural" man. They are often processes of chastisement and affliction ; the bread of adversity has to be eaten, much hardness has to be endured, many temptations withstood, sore trials encountered. As Joseph, and Daniel, and his compatriots found, the school of the spirit may be either a furnace of fire, or a den of lions, or a dungeon in which innocence suffers at the hands of injustice. It is often from the womb of sorrow that spiritual joy is born ; it is by the sweat of affliction that the crown of holy confidence is won ; it is after many tossings on the billows of tribulation that the peace of God is gained. All these things make men indisposed to spiritual culture ; and partly account for the general absence of this culture.

(*b*) But there is a second cause for this general neglect of spiritual education among men, and that is :—the rarity of methodized knowledge of the laws,

and operations, of the spiritual universe. Indeed the very existence of a distinctly spiritual universe; a realm of spiritual phenomena, spiritual laws, spiritual existences, can scarcely be yet regarded as a living element in the general consciousness of Christendom. The common Christianity is, for the most part, a religion of things visible and temporal. It is a religion of goodwill and kindliness, of individual resignation and social benevolence. Its worship and its sacraments are largely supposed to be wholly visible ordinances. Even when Christians contemplate the world to come, they too frequently contemplate it as coming after death. Death seems to multitudes of Christians to be the first beginning of the invisible, spiritual life.

All true Christianity has, indeed, the promise of "the life which now is."[1] Christianity is a life of present duty; a life of present social beneficence; a life of present individual goodness. But the great fact which is forgotten when the present visible results of Christianity are so much insisted on is, that according to the New Testament teaching, these results are the fruit, not the root, of the Christian life; and although if right fruit be wanting there must be something wrong with the tree: yet the real life of the tree depends on its roots, not on its fruits. The fruit is the evidence of the life of the tree: the means by which the tree reproduces itself and becomes nutritive to others; but the life of the tree is underground, hidden, invisible. If the roots are visible for long, the tree dies.

It is much the same with the tree of the Christian

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 8.

life. If it grows in shallow ground, if it has no roots except those which run in visible trails along the surface, it dureth only for awhile, and in time of trial fadeth away. It is this surface Christianity, this Christianity which seeks to be all fruit with little root, that is most prone to discomfiture by religious doubt. The roots of religion must be deep underground, out of sight of men, or else the tree will be unable to endure either scorching heat, or tempestuous wind.

The essence of the Christian life is a spiritual essence. Its birth is spiritual;[1] its nourishment is spiritual;[2] its companionships are spiritual;[3] its adversaries are spiritual;[4] its joys are spiritual;[5] its duration is eternal.[6] It neither begins nor ends at death. It begins with regeneration, and it never ends at all. Death is but a new stage in its development; its disentanglement from material limitations, its independence of material environment.

The distinct, vivid, realization of this realm of the spirit—a world in which the spirit dwells as the body dwells in the physical world, and the soul in the psychical world—is, of all things, the most necessary to the conquest of doubt. The victory which overcometh doubt is the culture, and exercise, of faith: *i.e.* the making real to ourselves, by spiritual education, the world of spiritual existences, with its laws and phenomena; just as, by training and toil, the man of physical science makes real to himself the phenomena, and laws, of the physical world. All

[1] John iii. 3. [2] John vi. 50; 1 Cor. x. 3.
[3] Heb. i. 14; xii. 1. Cf. also 2 Kings vi. 17; Matt. xxvi. 53.
[4] Eph. vi. 12. [5] Ps. xvi. 11; Gal. v. 22.
[6] 1 Pet. i. 4

truths are apprehended in their own sphere. Physical truth is apprehended by the senses, rational truth by reason, emotional truth by the emotions, moral truth by conscience, spiritual truth by the spirit. And in as far as religious truth implies, or involves, all these spheres of physics, emotion, reason, conscience, spirit; it needs the use of all these faculties to apprehend it in its fulness. "Hence the irrational, unemotional, immoral, or unspiritual man cannot see God, or the things of God in their entirety."[1] The man is defective; his religion is, therefore, defective also.

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.[2] We might as well hope to understand pure mathematics by the senses, as pure religion by reason alone. In learning mathematics, sense is a great help to reason; the use of diagrams is to gain for reason the assistance of sense. Similarly reason often greatly helps faith. None the less the province and faculty of reason are distinct from those of sense; and the province and faculty of spirit distinct from those of reason.

The faculty by which the spiritual universe is perceived and understood is not the understanding of the soul—what is commonly called "reason"—but the understanding of the spirit; that which St. Paul calls, "spiritual understanding."[3] The senses cannot perceive, and the reason cannot apprehend, the things of the spiritual universe; they are revealed by the Spirit of God, and can only be discerned by the spirit of man. The reason can give an intellectual assent to doctrinal propositions of religion; but the spiritual

[1] Cf. Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World."
[2] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [3] Col. i. 9.

realities which underlie the propositions can only be apprehended by the faculties of the spirit.

It is the absence of the realization of the existence of a distinct spiritual faculty in man, and of a distinct spiritual universe in which the faculty moves and has its being, that, more than all else, is responsible for the prevalence of religious doubt. And, for the absence of this realization, religious teachers are largely responsible. Christian theology is greatly chaotic, and has yet to be methodized on scientific principles. For in what does theology, as at present understood, largely consist? It largely consists in the recital of the opinions of ancient Fathers. These opinions are unquestionably valuable; and the men who held them, by reason of their nobility of character and their nearness to the age of Christ, are rightly venerated in the Christian Church. And in historic theology, just as in the history of physical science, the opinions held by great men in all ages claim a conspicuous record. None the less they are nothing more than opinions; and if, in later ages, by reason of the appearance of new light, or the birth of new methods, these opinions are found not to square with the facts of the case, nothing is left to the seeker for truth but to abandon the opinions, however venerable. And in this abandonment he cannot be charged with disloyalty to the Fathers; for it is not disloyalty to them, but loyalty to truth which causes the abandonment. Modern science is not disloyal to Sokrates because, in spite of the warning of Sokrates that all enquiry into physics was a profane intrusion into the special domains of the gods, modern science has continued its physical researches in the most

daring manner. And the Christian Church will not be disloyal to the Fathers if, in applying scientific methods to Christianity, it should modify, or even abandon, a few of the opinions which some of the Fathers warmly cherished.

In any case what is clearly needed in the modern world, a world dominated and penetrated with scientific methods and experimental principles, is scientific enquiry into the bases and laws of religion; and the application to religion of experimental tests. Modern theology without ceasing to be historical, urgently needs to become scientific. It needs to study the constitution of man, and the marvellous aptitude of that constitution for the religious life. It needs to study the phenomena of the spiritual universe, and the extraordinary correlation between the spiritual macrocosm external to man, and the spiritual microcosm within him. It needs to test by experiment the alleged facts, and the revealed laws, of the Christian religion. For, after all, it is only by experiment that the truths either of science, or religion, can be tested. If any man desires to know the truth of any law of physics, he tests it by experiment; neither is there any other sure way of testing the laws of religion. By obeying the laws of religion, men will soon cease to doubt either their existence, or their power.

There are, indeed, some truths of Christianity which are not verifiable by experiment: such truths, *e.g.*, as the eternity of God, which clearly stretches beyond the compass of verification; or the history of the Gospels, which like all other history is incapable of proof by experiment, although easily capable of other

forms of proofs; or prophetic truth, which lying wholly in the future cannot at present be tested. Yet with regard even to these, and similar kinds of Christian truth, it will, I think, on examination be found that, far from being contrary to, they completely fall in with, the general hopes, and fears, and notions, of mankind; notions so general to mankind, as to be permissibly considered constitutional to man. And this harmony between the truths of Christianity, and the constitution of man, is a very forcible argument in favour of those truths.

One other point should be noted in reference to experimental tests of spiritual truths: a point of singular difference between spiritual science, and either psychical or physical science. In either of the latter sciences one man can frequently demonstrate to other men the truth he seeks to establish; in the laboratory, in the college theatre, in the public lecture-hall, through the medium of books. In spiritual science, on the other hand, one man can seldom demonstrate its truths to other men; their proof is often personal, incommunicable, within the secret recesses of the inmost man. Nor is this fact to be greatly wondered at. For even with regard to sensible and intellectual truths, we know they can only be demonstrated to those who have sense and intellect; because, in order to accomplish any demonstration, a percipient reception is just as much necessary as perspicuous evidence. It is not, therefore, altogether strange that the demonstration of spiritual truths is impossible, except to those whose spirits are quickened and enlightened: for, in this respect, spiritual demonstrations are only on a par

with rational demonstrations, in antecedently desiderating the proper perceptive faculty. Still, the great difference remains between the demonstration of spiritual and other scientific truths: the latter being mainly objective, and evident to all men; the former being mainly subjective, and evident only to those who themselves make the experiment. A man without spiritual understanding could not follow the demonstration of a spiritual truth even if it could be shewn to him; because spiritual truths can only be spiritually discerned.

In endeavouring to overcome religious doubt nothing, then, is of greater importance than the culture of our own spiritual faculties. And in this culture a great step will have been taken when theology, instead of being so disproportionately traditional, *i.e.* occupied with the debateable opinions of men, shall have become more scientific; more devoted to the study of the phenomena of the spiritual universe, and to personal experiments of spiritual laws. When spiritual knowledge is augmented, religious doubt will be diminished.

In the pursuit of spiritual knowledge, however, it must be remembered that this knowledge, like every other form of knowledge, can only be acquired by submission to its own laws, and agreement with its own conditions. If, *e.g.* a man desires to know Euclid he must accept, and work from, Euclid's definitions, and axioms, and postulates. If a student of physical science desires to make experiments in the physical world, he can only do so successfully by operating in harmony with physical laws. In the realm of reason, if men would think effectually, they must think in

obedience to the necessary laws of thought. It is just the same with religion. The spiritual universe has its necessary laws ; and no experiments can be successfully made in religion unless they are made in harmony with those laws. If, *e.g.*, a man would believe effectually he must believe in obedience to the necessary laws of faith. A man without faith, can no more test the laws of faith, than a man without reason can test the laws of thought.

It appears certain from the obvious inequalities in the religious lives of men, that capacities for faith differ, just as capacities for sight and reason differ. All men are not equally long-sighted or broad-headed. Neither are all equally deep-spirited. All men are not Platos or Shakespeares or Newtons ; neither are all men Abrahams or Pauls or Luthers. Some men, indeed, have no reason at all ; and some are altogether void of faith. Yet as we regard the reasonless man as an exception, a kind of monster, in the world of reason ; so may we regard the man absolutely void of faith as a rare exception in the spiritual world. As a rule men are born with their whole faculties of body, soul, and spirit in good working order ; although the *degrees* in which they possess these faculties are as immensely various, as the varieties among men are vast.

Moreover two things appear quite sure in reference to the differences of faith among men. The first is that no one will be held responsible for a gift, or any degree of a gift, which he does not possess. The Judge of all the earth will do right.[1] The blind will not be judged as suicides for walking over precipices which they could not see. The imbecile will not be

[1] Gen. xviii. 25.

judged by the same code as the man with full reason. Those with few talents will not be expected to accomplish as much as those whose talents are many. It is according to what men have, not according to what they have not that they will be judged.[1] Still, on the other hand, men will be held accountable for what they have; even though what they have is only little. The man with but one talent is held responsible for his single gift. God will judge him severely for burying it in the earth, and keeping it useless.[2] In applying this law of Judgment to the gift of faith, we infer that the measure of responsibility is according to the measure of the gift; and that, however small a man's faith may be, he will be accounted responsible for the right cultivation, and full use of it.

And secondly, with regard to the differences of faith among men, it is quite certain that every degree of faith, whether small or large, is improved by cultivation, and diminished by neglect. Faith, like reason and sense, is very largely a matter of education and exercise. The savage who lives by his senses, whose very existence often depends on excellence of sight and hearing and smell, by reason of the constant exercise of these senses, develops them to a quite extraordinary degree. Similarly with reason. However large a man's congenital gift of intellect may be, if he does not carefully train and use it, it will lose both its aptitude and power. Indeed a small intellect, well nourished and trained, becomes of greater power and service, than a large intellect that is neither nourished by intellectual food, nor strengthened by intellectual effort.

[1] Luke xii. 48.

[2] Matt. xxv. 30.

In like manner, although capacities for faith greatly differ, yet the greatness of the difference is often due, less to differences of faith in childhood, than to the neglect or the culture of faith in after years. Small faith grows large by culture, large faith grows small by neglect. And seeing that both the neglect, and the culture, of faith are matters lying within the determination of the will, they are therefore, as we have just seen, matters for which we shall justly be held responsible. No man can, indeed, be held responsible for a measure of faith which is impossible to him, and beyond his reach; but every man is justly responsible for the full development of whatever degree of faith he possesses. In as far, therefore, as religious doubt, *i.e.* the littleness and weakness of faith, is the result of the wilful neglect of religion; we are as responsible for it, as for the intellectual ignorance which is the result of neglected education, or the sickness which is the result of neglected health.

In natural things, the laws of growth are not more certain in their operation than the laws of decay. If from the constitution of Nature we anticipate development and evolution from careful culture; so also from careless neglect do we anticipate inevitable degeneration, and reversion. And the constitution of the spiritual universe is evidently analogous, in this respect, to that of the physical universe. In both the physical and spiritual worlds alike "the decay of a faculty follows the disuse of its function." As the moles under the earth have almost entirely lost their sight, through not beholding the sun; so men who shut themselves out from the light of religion, gradually lose the vision of faith. By not

dwelling in spiritual light, the power to enjoy, yea, even to see, the light, gradually dies away. The universal testimony of religious persons is; that religious light, and food, and exercise, are as necessary to religious life and health, as physical light and food and exercise are necessary to physical health and life. In every department of human affairs we find, said John Stuart Mill, that "things left to take care of themselves inevitably decay."

As, therefore, religious doubt is in most instances due to the neglect of the spiritual nature in man, so its remedy is often found in the better culture of our spiritual nature. And for the culture of the spiritual nature in man, the following two principles will, I think, be found by experience both true in themselves, and serviceable in practice.

(*a*) The distinct acknowledgment of God as the primal source of man's spiritual nature. The life of man's spirit, as we have seen,[1] is as separate as the life of his soul, or the life of his body; and although, in his present stage of being, the life of no single part of man's trinal nature can be so isolated from the other two parts as to be wholly independent, yet the nature of each part is distinct from the nature of the other parts. The physical man is not psychical, nor the psychical spiritual. That this is so is evident, not only from the difference in their faculties—a man cannot grasp an idea or a sentiment with his body; neither can he lay hold of Christ or believe in God with his soul—but also from the differences of nourishment which each part severally requires: for if a man's body is hungry, he cannot feed it with a

[1] Cf. pp. 347, *et seqq.*

book; if his soul is hungry, flesh will not satisfy it; and if his spirit is athirst, it is only waters from spiritual fountains that can quench its desires. A syllogism, however perfect, will not appease a spirit longing, and crying out, for the living God. As nothing but matter can satisfy man's materiality, and nothing but what is human can satisfy his humanity, so nothing that is not divine can satisfy man's divinity.[1] Or to put the matter in another way. We can only understand things in so far as there is something in common between those things and ourselves. It is because of the animal in us that we can understand the ways, and feelings, of the lower animals. It is only through the medium of their common manhood, that any individual man can understand his fellow-men. And it is because of, and only by means of, the divine in man, that man understands, and holds fellowship with, the invisible things of God. Very exact is the language of St. Paul to the Galatian Christians; "the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with *your spirit*."[2]

This recognition of the distinctness of the spiritual life, and of its wholly divine origin, is part of the very essence of Christianity; yet is it but little understood by the intelligence of the world. The world confuses soul and spirit, civilization and Christianity, sorrow for guilt and sacrifice for sin, conduct and motive, philanthropic benevolence with religious charity. It is this confusion which leads worldly men into the notion that they can reason themselves, and others, into religion; whereas, in truth, a man can no more reason himself into religion,

[1] Cf. p. 339. [2] Gal. vi. 18.

if by religion be meant the spiritual life, than he can reason himself into physical life. When life has once begun, then reason can apprehend the laws of life, and can urge obedience to those laws. But the origin of every manner of life is external to the life itself. No living thing ever brought itself into existence. It was brought into existence from without. More than this. It is a law of biogenesis that everything "brings forth seed after its kind."[1] Nothing brings forth that which, in kind, is higher than itself. The inorganic does not gender the organic; nor the plant the animal; nor the unreasoning animal the reasoning man. The parentage of all physical things is physical; and of all psychical things psychical.

And spiritual life is no exception to this universal law. Spiritual life can no more be generated solely from psychical life, than psychical life can be wholly generated from physical life. And as if to mark, with unmistakeable clearness, the distinctly divine origin of the spiritual life, this life is communicated to man in a way of especial directness from God Himself. All life, indeed, comes from God. But, in the case of physical, and psychical, life, the life flows more obviously through the channels of human parentage, than in the case of the spiritual life. There are, indeed, not a few indications in Scripture that heredity is, at least, an influence in the generation of spiritual life. "The seed of the righteous shall be delivered."[2] "The generation of the upright shall be blessed."[3] The children of Christians are, by virtue of their parentage, called "holy" by St. Paul;[4]

[1] Gen. i., *passim*.
[2] Prov. xi. 21.
[3] Ps. cxii. 2.
[4] 1 Cor. vii. 14.

to distinguish them from the children of non-Christian parents. Perhaps, therefore, we cannot wholly eliminate the influence of human parentage even from the genesis of spiritual life. But it is very remarkable that, in the ladder of life, the lower we remain, the more exactly does the offspring reproduce the features of its own special parentage; and the higher we mount, the greater is the variety, and the difference, between offspring and parent. In the life of monads no difference is discernible from generation to generation; but, in all complex forms of life, the offspring has some marked individuality of its own, and is never wholly a mere reproduction of its genderers.

Moreover, in the triple life of man, each of the threefold portions of that life is, as we ascend the scale, less and less dependent on human parentage. The bodies of children are far more like, in the generality of instances, the bodies of their parents, than are their souls. Nothing, indeed, is more common than to find the souls of children—their reasoning powers, their affections, etc. — entirely different from the souls of their parents. There was nothing, as far as we can see, in Dante's parents to account for Dante, or in Shakespeare's parents to account for Shakespeare. And when from the soul we mount to the spirit in man, it is even more evident that the spiritual life of children is very frequently different from, and even contrary to, the spiritual life of their parents; as if to shew that the highest of all forms of life, which is the spiritual, is, less than any other, dependent for its existence on human parentage; and more than any other, derived

directly to the recipient from God Himself. All these things, indeed, are mysteries; yet, in their own sphere, are not greater mysteries than the origin of physical life and instinct, which is inscrutable to science; or the genesis of reason and conscience, which is inscrutable to philosophy. The important thing is not the mystery of the fact, but the fact itself, that spiritual life is distinguishable from the other parts of the life of man; that its origin is neither physical nor human, but spiritual and divine. In the language of science, "the spiritual faculties are organized in spiritual protoplasm, just as other faculties are organized in the protoplasm of the body."[1] Or in the better, and simpler, language of Christ, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born from above."[2]

In the consciousness of the primitive Church this distinctness of the spiritual life, originating in a distinct spiritual origin, was fully recognized. Such terms as "regeneration," "new-birth," "conversion" and the like, although not always rightly discriminated, yet, by their very existence, bear witness to the recognition. The Sacrament of Baptism is a continual attestation to the fact. And in the extension, and deepening, of this recognition in modern days, will be found a powerful remedy against religious doubt. For as religious doubt often has its origin in the secularization or rationalization of religion; so its antidote will often be found in the spiritualizing of religion. And the first step in the spiritualizing of

[1] Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," p. 233.
[2] John iii. 6.

religion is the clear realization of the distinctness of the spiritual nature in man, and of the acknowledgment of God as the only source of man's spiritual nature.

(*b*) The second principle to be obediently recognized in spiritual culture is the necessity of spiritual air, and spiritual nourishment, and spiritual exercise, for the life and growth of the spiritual nature of man. A spiritual atmosphere is as imperatively necessary to spiritual life, as physical atmosphere is necessary to physical life, or intellectual atmosphere to intellectual life, or moral atmosphere to moral life. The development of life is largely dependent on freedom and strength of air. In stifling air life is stunted ; in stimulating air life is strong. Not only life, but the character of life, is greatly affected by atmosphere, food, exercise, and environment. In his Romanes Lecture Dr. August Weismann even contends that the character of an organization is scarcely more dependent on heredity than on environment. He says: "It has long been recognized that external influences serve to stimulate the functions of the body, and I have attempted to show that in a great number of cases they also act in another and less apparent manner. They are used—so to speak—by nature to regulate in a purposeful manner the appearance of the various forms which members of a species may take. The germ must thus contain all the primary constituents (*Anlagen*) of these different forms; and a stimulus—produced by the kind of food, by light, by warmth, or by some other external influence—serves sooner or later to start the development of one kind or of another, as well as to decide

which kind it shall be." In the physical world, therefore, according to Dr. Weismann, it is external influence, or environment, which starts development, and also determines of what kind the development shall be.

And experience testifies that this law of the importance of external influence operates with equal energy in the intellectual, and moral worlds. One of the greatest of modern schoolmasters has observed,[1] that the large majority of youths who gain University Scholarships are youths who live in a lively intellectual atmosphere; an atmosphere quick with currents of free enquiry, and stimulating observation, and stirring thought. Natal intelligence is often smothered by unintellectual surroundings; and, although an intellectual atmosphere cannot create germs of intelligence; yet it can, and it does, develop to their highest capacity all existent germs, so that it may be reckoned that the intellectual differences among full-grown men are due as much to the differences of intellectual air and food, as to the differences of natal intelligence. In morals, the effect of external influence —of companionships, amusements, school, home—is so well understood as to need no illustration.

And what is true in other departments of the life of man, is true of man's spiritual life. That there are natal differences of spiritual capacity, and spiritual potentiality; as there are natal differences of physical strength, and intellectual capacity, and moral power, may be fully allowed. Yet the differences in spiritual power, and spiritual enlightenment, among full-grown men, are due quite as much to differences in spiritual

[1] Mr. Walker of St. Paul's School, London.

atmosphere and nutrition, as to original differences in spiritual capacity. To apply to spiritual things the language of Dr. Weismann; it is external spiritual influence which often starts spiritual development, and decides its degree. The spiritual air men breathe, the spiritual food they eat, the spiritual exercise they take, all combine to decide what manner of spiritual men they shall be; whether they shall be spiritually strong and firm, or spiritually weak and wavering.

It is indifference to, or ignorance of, this law of the influence of spiritual nutrition and activity, which causes a large proportion of religious doubt; and, when religious doubt has been thus engendered, the only remedy is to learn a knowledge of the law, and to act in obedience to it. If the spirit is not allowed to breathe a religious atmosphere, nor to partake of spiritual food, nor to exercise itself in spiritual activities, there must inevitably ensue an arrest of spiritual development, and ultimately a complete loss of spiritual insight and power. "What an organism is, depends on what it does; its activities make it. If it does nothing, in that relation it is nothing."[1] When men do not read the Bible and other Christian books, when they forsake the companionship of Christians, when they cease to meditate on Christian truths and to feed on Eucharistic nourishment, when they neglect to exercise themselves in Christian worship, and Christian conduct—the wonder is *not* that they become doubting Christians, but that they remain Christians at all, even in name. However innocent, or right, in its own sphere, a thing, or pursuit, may be; yet, if it draws men away from

[1] Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," p. 349.

religion, if it disproportionately absorbs their time and thoughts, it will render them, according to the degree of disproportion, non-religious.

The remedy, then, for religious doubt, the means by which spiritual vigour can be won, is, in kind, the same as for weakness and decay, in any other department of man's trinal nature; viz. the strengthening of the atrophied part by proper air, and food, and exercise. If we desire physical strength, we make use of the appointed means. To the obtaining of intellectual enjoyment we cultivate our intellectual powers. For moral victory, moral training is essential. It is just the same in matters of spiritual life, and health, and strength. The religious life is neither miraculous, nor mysterious, in any sense other than that, in which all life is mysterious and miraculous. It is, indeed, life of a higher kind, and in a special sphere. But in its sphere, and according to its kind, it is subject to laws similar to those which govern every sphere of man's multiple life. The Author of man's body, soul, and spirit is One and the Same; and the principles which control the growth of each portion of man's threefold being are, therefore, naturally similar. And as experience conclusively testifies, one of the fundamental principles of man's physical, and psychical, existence is; that life, and strength, depend on the use made of the means appointed for obtaining, and enjoying, them. The use of the means leads to the end for which the means were appointed. The neglect of the means involves the missing of the end.

In spiritual things, nothing can be more evident than the existence of a corresponding law. Spiritual

development depends on the use of spiritual means; and the neglect of spiritual means necessarily results in that loss of spiritual energy, and spiritual enjoyment, which lies at the root of most religious doubt. Often the best spiritual means are not those which unaided intelligence would of itself have suggested. In spiritual matters, divine revelation and the experience of the saints, are the best of all guides. In religion, as in all actual life, there is much misleading danger in *à priori* assumptions. As the best guide to intellectual knowledge is the experience of scholarly men; and in moral science, the example of good men; so in religion the surest means of spirit-culture are the methods, however simple and inadequate to the uninitiated they may seem, which have been used by those who have attained the most exalted heights of spiritual knowledge, and illumination.

Like all other toils, the toil of spiritual culture is rendered easier and pleasanter by habit; although, at the outset, it is sometimes found irksome. The birth of the spirit into conscious life may be sudden and glad; but its growth in knowledge, and power, is invariably slow, and often painful. In spiritual things we often, at the first opening of our eyes, only see men as trees walking. The light is dim, and our faculty to see is feeble. If, on a feeble eye, the light were poured in dazzling fulness; the sight would be overpowered, and blindness would ensue. It is better to see only half at first. But by the habitual training of the spirit, even amid half-lights, the vision is strengthened; and upon our increasing strength of vision God sends forth stronger beams of His glorious light as we are able to bear their splendour.

Not only are the beginnings of spiritual culture sometimes irksome, and the growth of faith gradual; but every doubt is not instantly removed when first we begin to believe. Great mental and spiritual discipline, and this extended sometimes over a lengthy period, often precedes the final conquest of doubt. But, by degrees, as faith develops, doubts diminish. And every victory over doubt is, as a rule, rewarded with fresh glories of faith. The spiritual eye which has begun to see, sees everywhere unfolding beauties; the ear, which has begun to hear, hears everywhere grander spiritual music: till, at length, in place of the blind, deaf, miseries of doubt, we are able to see, and hear, on earth, a kind of prelude to the beauties and harmonies of heaven.

> "To wake and know the new life throbbing, find
> Doubt and disquietude are left behind,
> Eyes opened, ears attuned to heavenly sound,
> Is Heaven found."

Finally, in reference to the culture of the spirit, nothing is more necessary to its progressive advancement, than assiduous and painstaking attention. "Hardly any faculty is more important," says Bishop Butler, "for the intellectual progress of man than Attention." The saying is equally true of spiritual progress. It is impossible to make great progress in the spiritual life, without sustained and diligent attention. Casual prayers, occasional worship, superficial and dilatory habits of religion, will never either stimulate faith, or dissolve doubt. It is only when prayer, and especially prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, has become so habitual as to be almost instinctive; when habits of worship have grown so strong as to resist the hardening influence of years, and

worldly affairs ; when research into, and meditation upon spiritual things, have become customary, and natural ; when, by the help of Scripture, of Sacrament, and of Self-sacrifice ; when, by purity of heart not less than of body, and by doing God's will because it is His—we have become consciously, and distinctively, spiritual ; then, and then only, shall we obtain final completeness of victory over the temptations, and assaults, of Religious Doubt. No other method of overcoming Religious Doubt has universally stood the test of trial ; but this method of patient, continuous, stedfast, and painstaking, cultivation of the spiritual faculties has, by multitudes of religious doubters who are now intelligent believers, been found completely successful ; and in no instance will it, upon fair and earnest trial, prove altogether unavailing.

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